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News. Clues. Kingdom views.

CHRISTIANCOURIER



Are questions the answer for the CRC?

Lloyd Rang

Where did all the young adults go? That's a question a lot of CRC congregations have been asking lately. According to a 2005 study by Synod, only about 60 percent of the children baptized between 1982 and 1985 made profession of faith in the years following. And it's not just a CRC problem. In American evangelical churches there's a 42 percent drop in church attendance by the time young people reach 25 and, by age 29, 58 percent of young people have dropped out.

If you don't believe the statistics, look at your own church for a little anecdotal evidence. You'll probably see a lot of seniors, late 30s to early 40s married couples and high school students. But young adults between the age of 20 and 35 are becoming a rarity in many churches. And that's alarming, says Martin Spoelstra, Pastor of Discovery Church in Bowmanville, Ont.

"Young adults bring something special to the church – a strong motivation and desire to help the community and a sense of volunteerism," says Spoelstra. "People in that generation are able to connect with those who have traditionally been non-church attendees. They bring people into church who otherwise wouldn't set foot in the door."

Some churches have adopted a wait-and-see attitude, hoping that when young adults settle down and start families of their own, they'll be drawn back into church. Other churches, though, aren't waiting around for that to happen. They're

actively reaching out to young adults – and young adults are flocking to those churches in droves.

The Meeting House

Bruxy Cavey is the Teaching Pastor of the Meeting House, a megachurch in Toronto that describes itself as "a church for people who aren't into church." Cavey has been the lead pastor of the church for the past 15 years, and over that time the Meeting House has grown from 150 to 5,000 members spread out over several campuses across the GTA. Many members of the Meeting House fit into that magical, missing demographic: young, energetic, university and college educated adults.

Cavey, a 47 year-old father of three, is in many ways an unlikely

preacher. "I wanted to be a DJ," says Cavey. "Then, I had some questions about human nature, so I studied psychology at York. Then I had some questions about God, so I studied theology at Tyndale, which led me to work for World Vision. When I was asked to become the lead pastor of a church I asked them if they were sure – I'd never even taken a course on how to prepare a sermon."

As Cavey tells it, one of the church elders conducting the interview leaned towards him and said "You can be our pastor on one condition: that you NEVER take a course on how to prepare a sermon." For Cavey, asking questions isn't just a personality trait – it's a key component of his spirituality and is central to the structure of the Meeting House.

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Why are so many young people walking away from the church?

"From the very beginning, we've encouraged people to ask questions during services," says Cavey. "We used to have people walking through the pews with microphones during the service. Now, members can just text their questions and we put them up on the big screen."

But the question-and-answer sessions don't just happen during the Sunday Church service. The Meeting House takes teaching

very seriously – it's not by accident that Cavey is billed as a "Teaching Pastor," and the "curriculum" is highly structured. Each week, Cavey organizes services around a central topic. As members enter church on Sunday, they're given handouts at the door that prompt questions and discussion. Later in the week, Meeting House members get together for "Home Church" –

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The invitation of the Belhar Confession

Albert Hamstra

The Christian Reformed Church's confessions are our foundational identity documents. They arise out of oppression and persecution by the 16th century Roman Catholic Church or controversy within the 17th century Reformed churches of the Netherlands. They are cries for the acceptance of a theological perspective and for the legitimacy of the community which held to that perspective. Each say in their own way: this is our faith, theological framework and spirituality, based in Scripture, consistent with the ancient creeds and resonant with our experience steeped in the suffering of our community. No wonder then,



The Belhar Confession uses the violence of apartheid in South Africa as a backdrop against which to explore the centrality of Scripture's teaching on unity, justice and reconciliation.

that the Heidelberg Catechism begins with the issue of the security of the community: "What is your

only comfort in life and in death?" At the time our confessions were written, people were being imprisoned, and in some instances even killed, because they adhered to the positions taken in them. We cherish our confessions because they say what we believe. We spilled blood for them. They define us. They tell our story.

At a recent gathering I heard a Native American (First Nations) CRC leader say, "When I read the Belhar Confession, I read the story of my people."

African-American and Hispanic leaders in the audience affirmed that this was also their experience. The theology and spirituality of the Belhar resonates deeply with the experience of suffering and liberation of these communities in ways that may be difficult for those of us from European backgrounds to fully understand. I heard these leaders share how they hear in the Belhar what we from Northern European backgrounds hear in our current confessions. The Belhar tells the story of how God liberated them and their people, granting them legitimacy and security.

For colonized people who
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local, midweek church services held at the homes of church elders – where the theme for the week is discussed again.

“Our goal, each week, is to have one topic with multiple points of entry, but the real discussion and learning happens at Home Church,” says Cavey. “Frankly, I tell people if they’re going to miss a service, they should skip out on Sunday service and go to Home Church instead. The focus of Home Church is how to apply the message to life, and for me, that’s the point of worship.”

Another feature of the Meeting House is community outreach. Members are encouraged to find a mission field – whether it’s a soup kitchen, or a community centre or in the workplace – to share God’s love and the message of the gospel.

“God has designed us to receive from him through each other,” says Cavey. “We’re wired to become fully human through mutually serving discipleship. So church has to be a mix of face-to-face communication, and shoulder-to-shoulder work.” It’s a vision of worship that resonates with young and old, says Cavey, but for young adults particularly, the mix of flexibility, community outreach and teaching is a potent mix.

A blueprint?

So, is the Meeting House a blueprint 21st century worship? Cavey is careful to point out that the Meeting House model isn’t for every church, and isn’t applicable in every community, but there is at least one very good reason why CRC congregations might want to take a closer look at what Cavey is doing: the greatest strength of this generation of young adults just happens to be the greatest strength of the Christian Reformed Church.

Marketing experts and demographers who have studied people born after 1980 – the generation sometimes called “Millennials” or “Generation Y” – insist this generation is unlike anything the world has ever seen. The children of Baby Boomers, they are technologically savvy and completely comfortable with social media. They tend to marry later, are skeptical about religion and suspicious of authority. Unlike the counterculture movement of the ’60s, Generation Y

doesn’t have an identifiable political orientation. What they share, however, is a tendency to ask questions.

Whether in the workplace or on Twitter, today’s young adults expect to be heard. And they demand answers. If they Tweet a question to a political leader or celebrity they expect to get an answer back. They are a generation who want information quickly, and they have the means to get it too.

Many books have been written about the clash that happens in the workplace between members of Generation Y and previous generations – like Generation X and Boomers – who see Millennials as disrespectful, impulsive and self-centred and Generation Y, who see older people as inflexible, slow and dull. Christian authors, too, are starting to come to grips with what this generation means for traditional churches.

For the Meeting House, which has always encouraged members to ask questions, the timing has been perfect. The technologically savvy, decentralized teaching model they’ve adopted is exactly what Generation Y is looking for.

This should be good news for the Christian Reformed Church, whose greatest strength and most defining characteristic has long been its emphasis on education. Like Cavey, John Calvin saw himself not as a pastor but as “a teacher in the church.” From the Q and A style of the Heidelberg Catechism to Christian education, CRC churches have prided themselves on their teaching. Ironically, however, this same emphasis on teaching may very well be what is driving young adults out of the CRC.

Message and method

Research by educational psychologists suggests that for Millennials to learn anything they need more than just information, they need to know how to apply knowledge to real-life situations. They want information delivered quickly in small doses, are prone to multitask, and will quickly become restless if forced to sit and simply listen to someone speaking. They get bored quickly and prefer to discuss issues and work collaboratively.

In other words, the Meeting House’s model of technologi-



Bruce Cavey is the Teaching Pastor of The Meeting House, a “church for people who aren’t into church.”

cally sophisticated, visual, interactive services, small groups and their emphasis on applied teaching is perfect for Generation Y. But the traditional CRC teaching method – a 20 to 30 minute sermon emphasizing correct doctrine with no opportunity for questions or feedback – is exactly what they detest most.

If there is good news, it is this: what’s turning young adults off church is not the *message*, but the *method*. As the Meeting House proves, young people are just as hungry for spiritual truth as they have always been. But how they arrive at that truth has fundamentally changed. Young adults don’t want to be spoken to, they want to be conversed with. They don’t want to know about correct doctrine, they want to know how the gospel connects with their lives. They don’t just want someone at the front of the church to tell them what to believe, they want to have a conversation about it.

For CRC churches, this represents both an enormous challenge and a tremendous opportunity. It’s a challenge because the changes required would be more than just the cosmetic changes that have happened to worship services to date. It’s bigger than just bringing a drum kit and some up-tempo praise and worship songs into the service – it’s about changing the structure of the service itself.

The opportunity is equally enormous, however. If the CRC, a teaching church if ever there was one, can change its pedagogy while hanging on to its theology, we may find a generation of young adults waiting outside the door, smart-phones in hand, ready to start asking some tough and important questions. ➤

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com) lives in Bowmanville, Ont.

Belhar Confession *continued*

have been robbed of their identity by those who stole their land, their language and their cultures – and then sought to justify that theft with racial theories and theological reasoning – the issues of unity, justice and reconciliation take on powerful, life-defining dimensions. By using the violence of apartheid in South Africa as a backdrop, the Belhar enables us to explore the centrality of Scripture’s teaching on unity, justice and reconciliation just as the oppressions and controversies of their time enable us to explore our current confessions with their theological distinctives.

The Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort and Belhar Confession each invite us to solidarity with the communities whose theological reflection and historical experience brought them into being. Adopting all four of these confessions will enable us to share our histories, our identities and our faith so that what was yours is now also mine, and what was mine is now also yours. In the end we can all, with added fervency and depth, give our Lord the glory which is his due.

Increasing diversity

Today the “we” of the CRC is no longer just people like me of white, Dutch background. We are determined, with God’s help, to increasingly become a diverse family with all of its richness and complexity. Among other things, this requires us to listen to each other’s stories so that we can become

more fully this beloved community together. We are now being invited to learn more about what God is like, what it means to be a Reformed Christian, and what it means to be the church from our brothers and sisters who clearly hear their story told in the Belhar. It is a story of astonishing power and beauty. It is also a story which speaks strongly of sin and pain. In the Belhar, we from Northern European Dutch Reformed backgrounds are challenged to recognize that, in the case of the historical background of the Belhar, it was people from our larger Dutch Reformed family who were the oppressors. This factor is one of the most important ways the Belhar differs from our current confessions. In them we Reformed people were the ones being victimized, while in the Belhar some of our larger family of Reformed people were the victimizers. Because of this, the Belhar offers opportunities for the CRC to confess its faith as a diverse family of God which the other confessions do less intentionally. What happens when those who identify with the oppressed explore the Biblical themes of unity, justice and reconciliation alongside those who are more traditionally identified with their oppressors? Through the Belhar, the CRC is invited to participate in this powerful work of God. To become a truly diverse family this exploration is essential. The Belhar enables us to have a conversation we must have.

Telling the truth

Is it possible for the various communities that form the CRC to tell each other the truth about the realities of their lives and their faith? Can we get beyond the distortions our violence-filled cultural history has given us? These may seem like odd questions. They arise out of my experience as a missionary in Asia for 18 years. During that time I was impressed by how difficult, and how rare, it was for the rich

and the poor, the powerful and the weak, to tell each other the truth. Therefore, genuine relationships between them were not really possible. Even in the church – in some ways especially in the church – I saw the old games of power and abuse being played. Moving back to America I find it is not different here, and I doubt if it is significantly different in Canada either. We need the Belhar to help us confront how the lies of abusive power, with its presumed superiority for some and imposed sense of inferiority for others, have warped our identities. None of our current confessions can be as clearly helpful to us to confront this evil as can the Belhar.

The CRC is being asked to make room for the stories (theology, spirituality, history and identity) of communities whose historical route to the Reformed faith is more immediately resonant with those of peoples oppressed by the European colonization of Asia, Africa, Latin America and North America than with those oppressed in Northern Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. Are we willing to give their story, as exemplified in the Belhar Confession, equal status to ours as one of the foundational identity documents of our denomination? The alternative, it seems to me, is to communicate that all who belong to the CRC family must identify primarily with the Northern European story of the 16th and 17th centuries because, we say, it is only that story which can be truly normative for our family. That would result in a tremendous loss for us all. ➤

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Column/Editorial

Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang

Don't ask



Here's something fun to try at church next Sunday. Walk up to someone you don't know very well, shake their hand and say: "So, Bob, how's your relationship with your wife going? I mean how is it REALLY going? You know what I mean, Bob."

"Not to beat around the bush, Bob, but you've been together a lot of years. Be honest: is your sex life routine, now, Bob? Or is it pretty much just non-existent?" For that last part – make sure Bob's wife is standing close by. And if you could please tell them you got the idea from *Christian Courier*, that would be super. The letters to the editor page has been a little quiet lately.

No. Wait. Better yet: don't do ANY of that.

Don't do it for the obvious reason that marriages are intimate, personal relationships between two people. It's a bond husbands and wives share and no one – not their closest friends, not their family – has access to the depths of that relationship. Husbands and wives know each other in ways that no one else does, or can.

In marriage we reveal our true selves to each other and we are transformed by doing so. When we come to know each other intimately, that intimacy changes us. As someone who stands outside that intimate relationship, you have no right to pry into it. And even if we did pry, we couldn't really understand it.

So most of us don't casually ask that question. Not if you don't want a cup of after-church coffee in the face. On the other hand, we might casually ask: "So, how's your relationship with God?"

Now, growing up in a rural Christian Reformed church in the '80s, no one ever asked ANYONE that question. I remember first hearing it during grad school in the 1990s. It rubbed me the wrong way, back then. It still does, actually.

And here's why: First off, it's presumptuous. You don't ask someone who is apple-cheeked and healthy and running marathons if they've seen a doctor lately. That's a question you ask someone who looks like Abe Vigoda. Second, it's arrogant. You don't ask a question like unless you're sure your own relationship is pretty solid. It sounds smug. And third, worst of all, it's superficial. When someone asks this question, I get a mental image of Jesus and me on the couch, eating chips and watching *Hockey Night in Canada* on the flat-screen.

Because, the way I hear it, that's what's being asked: "Are you spending time with God? Are you praying? Are you reading your Bible?" Well, of COURSE I am. If I'm not spending any time with God, I can hardly call myself a Christian, now, can I? But spending time with God is only the means to the relationship, not the end. Praying, reading and meditating aren't the relationship – these things are how the relationship can happen, to be sure – but they aren't the relationship. I'd be happy to tell you about my devotional time, and my thoughts about faith and culture and liturgy. Heck, that's why I write this column. But the only one who truly understands my relationship to God, is God.

Standing before him, and speaking with him, we are revealed for who we truly are. Like all relationships, our relationship to God tells us things we don't want to hear and forces us to see things in ourselves we'd rather not see. We say things to him in private that we would rather not admit to others. And our relationship with God can be tempestuous, too. Mine sure is.

You know that poem, "Footsteps?" The one that ends with Christ saying "and that's where I carried you?" That's not my beach, brother. On my beach, you can see long strides where I've run away, and he's come after me. Deep indents where I've stamped my foot down. Signs of a struggle where I've wrestled with him. And butt prints in the sand where I've sat down, cried and refused to go one step further or even be carried. Yes, there are stretches where there are two sets of footprints side-by-side – but there are fewer of them than I want, or care to admit.

If you ask me about my relationship with God, you'd better be prepared to hear the truth. You'd better be prepared to hear that I spend a good deal of my time with God feeling angry at him for how I feel he's treated me. Guilty for how I've ignored him or let him down. And ashamed at the things I've done, or not done. Or filled with sorrow for how I've treated friends, and family, and for not using the time he has given me more productively. Most of the time, my relationship with God is hard work. Yes, it's fuelled by love. But from MY end, at least, that love is pretty complicated.

But that's also how I know it's real. That's how I know he's changing me. That's how I know my relationship with God is the most intimate and important thing in my life. I know my relationship with God is the centre of my life because I couldn't describe it in a book, I can't write it on a bumper sticker and I am sure as heck not going to talk to a near-stranger about it after church in the Fellowship Hall.

So if you see me slurping coffee after church, by all means come over and ask me about my relationship with God. Just be prepared to answer questions about your sex life, is all.

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com) lives in Bowmanville, Ont.



You know that poem, "Footprints?" The one that ends with Christ saying "and that's where I carried you?" That's not my beach, brother.

CrossFit



Michael Buma

In my last editorial ("Fitness and the gym" CC Feb. 13) I discussed the challenges of staying in shape, one of the biggest of which for me is the superficial culture and quasi-industrial ersatz shopping mall atmosphere of the modern gym. I closed by suggesting I'd discovered a better way, and promised to explain more fully in this editorial. So here it is: since May 2011 I've been following a fitness philosophy and regime called CrossFit. Simply put, I believe it is the best workout program out there.

CrossFit WODs ("workout of the day") incorporate a wide range of exercises and movements which are broad, general, inclusive and designed to work the entire body rather than target specific muscle groups (such as in most cosmetic fitness routines). Each day a new WOD is posted for free on the CrossFit website, which also contains a vast collection of instructions, explanations, demonstration videos and other important information on what exactly CrossFit is and how to do it safely and effectively. During my first five months on the program I enrolled at a local CrossFit gym to learn the basics and movements, etc., but I now do my WODs in a makeshift home gym that I've constructed in my garage (I loved the community and camaraderie of working out in the CrossFit gym, but it was quite expensive).

Functional superiority

I closed my previous editorial by suggesting that CrossFit is both functionally and morally superior to the standard 21st century gym. These are lofty claims, and I'll spend the remainder of this article substantiating them. Probably the most compelling argument for CrossFit is that it works. I was in decent shape when I first started doing CrossFit WODs (I met most of the benchmarks for "well-rounded beginner"), but nonetheless dropped 10 pounds in my first two weeks on the program. More dramatic has been the increase I've seen in my strength, energy level and overall health. Quite simply put, I feel great and am in the best shape of my life. I *never* saw results like this from going to the gym.

Beyond mere anecdotal evidence, there's a growing body of scientific research suggesting that short bursts of high intensity effort are the most effective way to lose weight and develop



Michael doing pullups in his garage gym as part of a CrossFit WOD. He declines comment on how many he can actually do.

cardio fitness (if you're curious about this you can read up on "surge training" or "Tabata training"). CrossFit workouts are based on these principles, and typically require maximum effort and intensity for relatively short periods of time. Aside from being effective, this makes CrossFit incredibly efficient: most WODs last under 20 minutes, which is great for busy people with busy lives.

CrossFit is also functionally superior because it is infinitely scalable and universally applicable. Based on the belief that the fitness needs of an Olympic athlete and an 85 year-old great-grandmother differ by degree rather than kind, CrossFit workouts are accessible and beneficial to anyone who enjoys basic mobility regardless of age or the kind of shape they're in. There are endless gradations of each CrossFit exercise, and so literally anyone can do a WOD at their own level.

One of the major challenges to keeping in a fitness routine is boredom, and CrossFit overcomes this by offering a huge range of exercises and movements, and by combining them in unique and varied ways with each new WOD. For instance, the WOD I did yesterday consisted of three rounds of the following: run 400 metres, 30 box jumps (jumping up and down onto and off of a 24"

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Editorials

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platform), and 30 wall ball shots (tossing a 20 pound medicine ball eight feet high against a wall, then catching in a squat). Having just looked at the CrossFit website, I know that today's WOD will consist of five rounds of the following: 20 ring-rows (a gradation of pull-ups), 30 kettlebell swings, and 40 double-unders (skipping).

Finally, CrossFit workouts require relatively little in the way of equipment. Most garages and basements can be outfitted with the minimum requirements to do many basic WODs for only a few hundred dollars (see the article "How to Build a World Class Fitness Facility in Your Garage" in the *CrossFit Journal*).

Moral superiority

To say that CrossFit is morally superior to the regular gym may be a bit unfair, and should definitely not be taken as wholehearted endorsement. Like everything on the "in progress" side of sanctification, CrossFit is not without its moral failings. For instance, the program is highly and uncritically on board with the American military, and its rhetoric sometimes lapses into patriotic jingoism. Also, there are people within the program who advocate the nutritionally suspect "paleo" diet, which specifies no carbs whatsoever, lots of meat-based protein and a ton of vegetables (although most of us *could* stand to eat more protein, less carbs and more vegetables). And like the culture of the gym, CrossFit does put some emphasis on cosmetic fitness – a tendency that, unfortunately, will probably escalate now that the franchise has signed an endorsement deal with Reebok (you may have seen the Superbowl commercial "announcing the sport of fitness"). But none of these detriments are the primary focus of the program.

What makes CrossFit morally superior to a self-guided program of free weights and cardio designed to yield the perfect "beach body" is its insistence on well-roundedness and functionality. CrossFit exercises work the entire body, and prepare participants for functional real-world movements. On my first day in the CrossFit gym where I began my training, I asked my coach why CrossFit always uses pull-ups and never chin-ups. I was amazed by the practicality of the answer: because chin-ups are a movement you will never be required to do in the real world. Pull-ups, on the other hand, or movements using the same muscle groups, are incredibly commonplace (think of climbing a ladder or putting something on an upper shelf or, to imagine a worst case scenario, clinging desperately to the edge of a cliff you've somehow fallen off of).

CrossFit is not for people who work out in order to conform to our culture's rather crazy ideas of beauty. It will not give you muscles like an Olympic weight-lifter, or like the top-heavy-looking muscle guys at the gym with inflated pecs and biceps but disproportionately small quads and calves. Rather, CrossFit athletes are lean, trim, quick and surprisingly strong for their body size. They look like normal, properly proportioned people, but are exceptionally fit, healthy and energetic. When I was working out at the CrossFit gym, I asked one of the other members, a man in his mid-40s, why he chose CrossFit. "I'm training for fatherhood," he said. "I want to be able to keep up with my kids." What a great reason to stay in shape. ➤

Michael Buma teaches in the English and Kinesiology departments at the University of Western Ontario, and is interim editor of the Christian Courier. His garage contains a world class fitness facility, which he tries to use at least three times a week.

Plate politics**Ken Dam**

I have discovered the miracle elixir of life. It is currently brewing in my dining room, in a four-quart glass jar, covered with a cotton tea towel. Ten days from now, it will be ready. I will have home brewed an ancient remedy known for producing beneficial enzymes, acids and vitamins. And with it, I will aid my digestion, eliminate toxins, support my immune system and enjoy an energy boost. I can guess what you're asking. What is this miracle drink, and did Jesus drink it? Well, with regard to the second question I have found no evidence that he did. Most theories trace the drink's origin to a couple hundred years before Christ, in China, where it was known as the "Tea of Immortality." Curiously, however, I did discover that a key ingredient of my elixir is lichen, which contains antibacterial usnic acid. According to some theories usnic acid was a major ingredient in manna. My drink, produced for approximately a dime a cup, claims a food lineage harking back to Yahweh's miracle provision to his covenant people.

Making my heavenly home-brew, known as kombucha (pronounced "kom-boo-cha"), is not very difficult. Cleanliness is important, as well as maintaining an appropriate temperature during the brewing period. The first step is obtaining the kombucha bacteria culture – or "mother" – that sits atop the sugar-tea mix converting the sugars into my own elixir (see Page 20 for a kombucha recipe if you'd like to brew some yourself). What I like most about brewing kombucha is the connection I have to contributing to my own health and well-being. I made it. I brewed it myself. From production to fridge, I was in control. I know exactly how it was made, under what conditions, and what its ingredients are.

This connection to my own sustenance is part of a larger journey of reconnecting with the land – the source of our food – that my wife and I have undergone in the last number of years. During this journey, we've begun to ask questions we never asked before. Where do these strawberries I am eating in February come from? How come processed boxed food is cheaper than fresh food? How come there are 25 ingredients in my store bought loaf of bread, most of which I can't pronounce? What sort of life did the chicken in my chicken finger lead? Is there even chicken in this finger? Do cows normally eat corn? Do cows like eating other dead cows? Why does the average food item on an American plate need to travel 1,500 miles to get there? The more questions we asked, the more we began to realize that there was something very wrong about our current industrial food system. Furthermore, compared to earlier generations, we realized we knew very little about food, self-provision, seasonal eating, and we had virtually no connection to the land and food that sustains us. For us, this meant a need for a revolution in our food thinking.

Thinking about food

Reading an article by Joel Salatin, the self-described "Christian libertarian environmental capitalist lunatic farmer" who was featured in the movie *Food, Inc.*, I came across the following quote: "How can these people [Christians]... sit in the pew and take the sacraments all the while dumping toxic chemicals on God's earth? How can they sit there and not wrestle with the moral question of whether it matters that we encourage the pigness of the pig? The great questions of life, they don't even wrestle with. How did this happen?"

It's a good question. Sadly, my own previous thought process regarding food is instructive in answering it. I could probably have summed up my thinking according to two principles: convenience and cost. This frozen pizza requires very little effort to throw in the oven. I got it on sale, and after all, I was raised to use my money wisely and frugally. And it tastes darn good, especially the meat lover's version. The question of where the meat on my pizza came from never crossed my mind. If it had, I would have been confronted with the reality of mechanized confined animal feedlot operations (CAFO), where thousands upon thousands of cattle congregate in crowded conditions to fatten up on corn sludge fortified with antibiotics. If I dug deeper, I'd have uncovered the impact of these CAFOs on water pollution (ocean dead zones) and greenhouse gases, and their dependence on massive monocultures of corn, soy and other grains, which in turn has led to the destruction of vast tracts of the world's tropical rain forests. The impact of growing massive monocultures of continuous corn with the aid of nitrogen fertilizers and pesticides on songbird and bee populations was far from mind.

I didn't have to think about these things, because they weren't right in my face. I could look the other way because I didn't get my pizza from the land. Like all my food, I got it from the grocery store. That massive storehouse of boxed, processed, corn-based, sugar coated, convenience "food," so far removed from any actual farm that most of the food would be nearly impossible to trace to its origins. By our industrial agriculture's very design, and its grocery store delivery system, our food has been purposefully disconnected from the land that gives us our sustenance. Ask no questions and the grocery store tells no lies. And that is what my food journey is all about. Re-connection.

Fast forward a few years and I have started to develop my thinking a little further. The explosion of farmers markets, the rise of organic food, the prevalence of self-labeled "foodies" or "locavores," movies like *Food, Inc.*, and books like Michael Pollen's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* or Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* have pushed the issue of food and food questions into the limelight. The critique of industrial agriculture is nothing new, but the fervour and demand for a new



In confined animal feedlot operations, thousands of cattle congregate in crowded conditions to fatten up on corn sludge fortified with antibiotics.

Christian Courier

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An independent biweekly that seeks to engage creatively in critical Christian journalism, connecting Christians with a network of culturally savvy partners in faith for the purpose of inspiring all to participate in God's renewing work within his fallen creation.

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Letters

First Nations crisis

Reading Chandra Pasma's article on "Attawapiskat and the First Nations Crisis" (CC Feb. 13) reminds me of one question in my mind that has been there for quite some time already. We are told that the government has spent \$90 million on the First Nations. We also hear all the time that the government is shamefully neglecting the First Nations. And the pictures we are shown in the press certainly show unbelievable neglect.

However, I have never seen or heard anything about efforts on the part of the

First Nations themselves to do something about it. Do the people who live in those "homes" not have hammers to nail a sheet of plywood down? Or a pail of water and detergent to scrub the floor? Do they not have shovels to fix up the road and level it out? This is not to doubt the serious nature of the First Nations crisis in anyway. Believe me. But there are two sides to the story and I am eager to hear the other side of the story.

Martin D. Geleynse
Stratford, Ont.

Regarding "Attawapiskat and the First Nations crisis" (CC Feb. 13), Canada's First Nations policies have been a failure for 145 years despite an endless succession of studies, conferences and court challenges. We need creative thinking. Gordon Gibson's 2009 book, *A New Look at Canadian Indian Policy* deserves consideration.

Gibson's position is that Aboriginals should be free to choose whether to be on reserve or "go to town." They are legally free to do so but government incentives are biased to keep Aboriginals on reserve. In spite of perverse incentives, half have already "come to town."

Canada has a *de facto* apartheid supported by government incentives that work against Canadian Aboriginals coming to town. Gibson suggests continuing support for those on reserves while significantly increasing support for those wishing to settle in urban Canada. Generous support for Aboriginals should be available regardless of their postal code.

Asian and other immigrants can access settlement services, but Aboriginals wishing to settle in town are largely on their own.

Why? Because there is widespread sentimentalism that Aboriginals belong on reserve and should be kept there. It is the default position underlying all federal government First Nations programs. But it is wrong. That decision should be left to them.

Our policies are a shameful failure. It is not for lack of guilty feelings, money or goodwill. It is a lack of imagination and misplaced paternalism.

We need to rethink the endgame. What are we aiming to accomplish? It is impossible for a few people on most remote reserves to maintain a standard of living comparable to urban Canada without massive government handouts. Is perpetual dependence on handouts a prospect we should wish on anyone? Why do Christians keep telling government to hand over more money for a system that keeps people in locations where life is bound to be "nasty, brutish and short?" Is that the loving thing to do? Is that the best Christians can do?

Nick Loenen
Richmond, B.C.

Plate politics *continued*

"sustainable" food system has certainly reached new levels. Millions of other Americans and Canadians are asking the same sort of questions my wife and I are.

Faithful eaters

How do we go about both reconnecting to and revolutionizing our supply of food? That is a big and complex question. I think it starts with a small question: how did this food get to my plate? This simple question opens up a whole world of plate politics. In answering that question, we are forced to face the question of whether or not we are faithful eaters. Every small food purchase becomes a big act. Your grocery store shopping becomes an activity imbued with significance. For you have an opportunity to, in your own small way, contribute to restoring and bringing healing to a tired land. We, the eaters, have the power to encourage a renewed food culture, one that works to reshape a distorted and destructive industrial agricultural system toward a new direction. A direction that is not just "sustainable," but faithful. What does a faithful agricultural system look like? I'm not completely sure, but I think it will in many ways mirror the gifts of God to humanity: it will bring renewal, healing and long-term fruitfulness. To start moving in this direction, we must see beyond cost and convenience. These modern day food gods must be drowned in the very toxic cocktails that made them possible in the first place.

For my wife and I, this has meant participating in a local CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), as well as starting our own vegetable garden. Much of the spring and summer is spent tending to tomatoes, potatoes, kale, swiss chard, beans, peas, carrots, onions and far too many hot peppers. We have been inspired by many others around us doing the very same thing. We feel connected and rooted. It has meant a better life, a happier one, more delicious and nutritious, more passionate, experimental and filled with gratitude. We have begun to see beyond mere cost and convenience, and are much better for it. And if we continue to drink our kombucha, the "tea of immortality," we may just live long enough to see our children's children benefit from a new plate politics, one concerned with leaving behind a faithful food legacy. ➤

Ken Dam (tuneintoken@gmail.com) lives, gardens, cooks and brews in Hamilton, Ont. He works as a labour relations specialist with the Christian Labour Association of Canada.

More on 'bad' language

In response to both Michael Buma's article, "Thoughts about parenting, or, the unlikely success of a transgressive children's book" (CC Jan. 9) and the letters to the editor that followed the printing of this article (CC Feb. 13), I feel compelled to pass on the following quote from Christian writer David Dark's book, *The Sacredness of Questioning Everything*:

"If we're more opposed, for instance, to what we take to be 'bad language' and nude scenes and films about gay people than we are to people being blown up, starved to death, deprived of life-saving medicine, or tortured, our offendedness is out of whack. We have yet to understand the nature of real perversion. We aren't as deeply acquainted with our religion as we might think."

As an English teacher and lover of language, I rejoice that the written word retains the power to unify and divide. There is nothing inherently "good" or "evil" about a collection of letters, placed together on a page. Words are powerful, thank God, and when they are wielded to provide comfort and reassurance (as I believe the "transgressive" book was meant to do) to an overwhelmed, diaper-worn, baby-spit-up-covered populous who otherwise must toe

the current cultural party line that parenthood is all smiles and satisfaction, I believe those words are nothing less than living water for the thirsty.

If we refuse to read the writers who had the courage to engage the divisive issues of their time, our bookshelves would look pretty scant. I am not arguing that Adam Mansbach is the Dostoevsky or Tolstoy of our time, but perhaps there is something to consider in that comparison. Although it is 2012, it is rare that I have seen a book whose thesis rests on the intimate dealings of the domestic sphere, written by a man. Perhaps some of the reaction to this "transgressive" book has more to do with the unconscious cultural belief that such topics remain the purveyance of the maternal or "woman's" world – a place where, surely, no one uses the "f" word, especially in regards to one's children! Whether or not this has any bearing on the issue, what I believe most important is that we Christians especially do the hard work of discernment when we encounter a text – to do otherwise is to plumb the depths of a kind of pat superficiality which is most certainly "of this world."

Katie Hoogendam
Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont.

Christian schools

One of the "10 questionable terminations" John Joosse mentions in his "Thoughts about excellence and authority in Christian schools" (CC Feb. 13) was my brother.

As I read Joosse's thoughts I continued to hear the song in my head "And they'll know we are Christians by our love." Apparently authority and the pursuit of excellence trump the love thing, regrettably, in some of our schools. How sad, in these cases, that teachers have lost their value. And how sad, the manner in which they have been discarded. All, ironically, casualties in the preservation of educational excellence.

Measuring the cost of these terminations against the preservation of this "excellence" is not excellent. Hence the influence of some peoples' idolatry for business models in our schools and their canonization as the

framework in which we operate might need to be given some confession, some re-thinking. Especially if these people are in leadership roles. But maybe it's just business. I get confused from time to time.

However, some of these "mediocre" teachers give me courage when I hear that some are willing to defend their fellow teachers even at the expense of their jobs. If these stances define our mediocre teachers then I stand behind them and am very suspicious of these boards and their school cultures in their promotion of this brand of excellence.

I can't imagine being in a school society where these things have happened. From a human point of view, I say to you, "good luck." From a point of view that might be more Christ-like, I say to you ... dare to be a Daniel.

Name withheld by request

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News

CRWRC responding to yet another West African drought

BURLINGTON, Ont (CRCNA) – A growing food crisis has put between five and nine million people at risk of going hungry in the Sahel region of West Africa, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) and other international relief agencies are reporting.

Especially vulnerable are some one million children in the area, which has been plagued with chronic levels of food insecurity, poverty and malnutrition for many years.

As CRWRC is completing a \$10 million-response to the devastating drought elsewhere in eastern Africa, the agency has begun to turn its attention to providing help to people in the semi-arid region south of the Sahara. A season of erratic rainfall, drought and insect infestations has led to the severe food shortage. The region includes Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, and the northern regions of Cameroon, Nigeria and Senegal. It's estimated that up to 23 million people in the region have been affected by the drought and could face hunger if a disaster is not averted.

CRWRC's immediate focus will be on Niger, which is one of the most severely impacted countries in the region. In Niger, insufficient rains nationwide have led to a 31 percent decline in crop production compared to last year. Experts estimate that cereal production for Niger's 15 million people is likely to be the lowest in 20 years. Like other countries in the region, Niger has also been impacted by steep increases in food prices.

Compounded problems

The country has also been negatively affected by the recent crisis in Libya. For years, many of Niger's people have depended on family members who lived and worked in Libya. During the crisis people fled Libya, leaving behind their jobs and belongings, and causing their families to



suffer from the loss of income and the added burden of more mouths to feed. Recently, many people have also fled to Niger to escape a new crisis in Mali, further increasing the number of people who are vulnerable.

As a result of this combination of events, one-third of Niger's population has been declared "food insecure" by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. This means that people are unable to find enough nutritionally adequate food to stay healthy and active. In Niger's urban areas, 32 percent of the people are already "food insecure," and in rural areas just over half the population is.

In the face of this new crisis, CRWRC is in the planning process with its partners to determine how best to respond. They are currently planning food assistance, including the subsidized sale of grain, various food-for-work activities, distribution of seeds and possibly the digging of wells.

CRWRC has been working in Niger for nearly two decades, in partnership with local churches and community organizations. The agency's relief officials are asking Christian Reformed Church members to pray for the millions of people across the Sahel who are once again experiencing a severe drought and facing hunger. CRWRC is also welcoming donations to assist its response in Niger.

Aggressive secularism is a myth, says Irish Times; think again, says critic

Marian Van Til, with files from CWN, IT, TIC

DUBLIN – Late last month *The Irish Times* pronounced in an editorial that "aggressive secularism" is a myth. It is actually the product of the "over-active imaginations of religious people" who can't stand the fact that the influence of religion in society is waning.

The editorial took to task British Cabinet Minister Baroness Warsi for recently warning against the rise of militant secularism. It attacked as "overblown rhetoric" observations about curtailment of religious freedom by Warsi and others, including U.S. Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum. It insisted there is not even "a germ of truth" to that curtailment.

The editorial elicited a pointed response from David Quinn, an Irish religious and social affairs commentator and director of the Iona Institute. The Iona Institute describes itself as promoting the place of marriage and religion in society, defending the continued existence of publicly-funded denominational schools in Ireland and promoting freedom of conscience and religion.



Quinn noted that, according to the *Times* editorial, there are all kinds of anti-Christian things going on that have absolutely nothing to do with "aggressive secularism": the huge popularity of aggressively anti-religious books like *The God Delusion* by well-known atheist Richard Dawkins and *God Is Not Great* by the late Christopher Hitchens; the constant ridiculing of religion in public debate; the (now withdrawn) motion before the Labour Party calling for the screening of civil servants to ensure they aren't "Catholics

first and Irish second"; the incitement to hatred complaint against Bishop Philip Boyce who said the church is under attack by the arrows of a "God-less culture"; or the statement by Labour TD Aodhán Ó Riordáin that "religious ethos has no place" in our schools.

Out of sight, out of mind

Quinn observed, "Tellingly, the above stories hardly featured in *The Irish Times* at all, so maybe that's why the [editorialist] doesn't think aggressive secularism exists." He noted that it is precisely "these sorts of issues, and many more besides, that have convinced religious leaders from the Pope, to Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to Jonathan Sacks, the British chief rabbi, that there is indeed such a thing as 'aggressive' or 'militant' secularism, and that it is indeed trying to push religion out of public life."

Quinn also called attention to how Christians and other people of faith are being prevented from acting on their beliefs and consciences in other areas of life in Ireland. For example, pharmacies and individual pharmacists must sell abortion-inducing drugs. And, if asked, churches must rent their halls to a same-sex couple for their civil partnership reception in violation of its ethos – or face legal sanction. When the Irish Catholic hierarchy issued a statement objecting to the Civil Partnership Bill for same-sex couples, Green Party minister John Gormley told the bishops not to "intrude" on matters of state. And former Justice Minister Dermot Ahern had advised politicians not to let faith "cloud" their judgment.

Quinn concluded that *The Times*' dismissal of the vociferous influence of secularism illustrates the influence that aggressive secularism actually wields, since that editorial judgment is based on "an extremely narrow understanding of religion's role in public life."

Ontario: Brock student fundraisers harassed over ties with 'racist, homophobic' Christian organization

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. (CNA) – Students at Brock University in St. Catharines who were raising money for a charitable program abroad have been harassed by protestors over the program's connection with the Christian Life Movement.

The protestors, calling themselves "Occupy Brock," apparently had links to a campaign by Ana Isla, an associate professor in women's studies. Isla had been working to halt Brock's Solidarity Experiences Abroad (SEA) program because it was created through the work of Catholic campus minister and member of the Christian Life Movement Brother Raoul Masseur.

Since 2006 Isla has been pressuring the Brock to drop programs linked with religious organizations, which she charges are homophobic and opposed to women's rights.

On Feb. 13 the Occupy Brock group issued three action-alert messages on Facebook, urging fellow students and others to demonstrate against the SEA's fundraising for projects in Latin America and Africa. One of the messages asked locals for help to "stop this homophobic, misogynistic and racist organization."

According to observers, the protestors harassed students attending the fundraiser and distributed fliers with claims against the SEA program that have already been dismissed in an investigation by Brock's Advisory Internationalization Committee.

Over 200 letters of support from alumni of the SEA program flooded Brock in recent weeks after Isla, in December 2011, urged the university to end the program and remove "all ties" to local partners of the trips.

No evidence

In a three-page memo to the Sociology Department Isla criticized the placement of Brock students in Christian Life Movement facilities and projects while abroad. Although most of Isla's charges were leveled against the Christian Life Movement and unrelated to the program, she claimed that the SEA allowed untrained students to provide medical care at charity clinics in Lima, Peru.

"The internationalization committee, after thorough research and investigation of the allegations, presented against me and local partners determined that there is no evidence to support those claims," Br. Raoul Masseur told CNA. "Therefore," he added, "there is no longer any question about the integrity of the individuals involved nor of the organizations involved."



Br. Massuer also said he was grateful and "very impressed" with the "articulate content of these letters of support from many students, also senior administrators and staff members that participated in SEA Programs."

Since its creation in 2004 as a "non-religious" program, SEA has allowed thousands of students from Brock and 16 other universities "to develop their careers in solidarity and service to those most in need," Massuer said. The SEA program has spread to Ecuador, South Africa, Namibia, Costa Rica and Brazil, with trips organized by chaplains from different denominations. In Peru alone, the program has brought assistance to more than 100,000 people of low income.

Br. Masseur and other parties involved Isla's attempts to remove the SEA program have submitted religious discrimination claims to the university, which are currently being processed by the Office of Human Rights at Brock.

News

Canadian evangelicals 'disappointed' in ruling on parental authority, religious freedom in education

Marian Van Til, with files from EFC

OTTAWA—Last month the Supreme Court of Canada released its decision in a case that many Christians and other people of faith hoped would better define parents' rights to choose the kind of education their children receive, especially regarding religious instruction.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) had intervened in the case called *S.L., et al. v. Commission scolaire des Chênes, et al.*, presenting written and verbal arguments at a May 18, 2011, hearing.

The outcome? "We are disappointed with the decision," said Vice-President and General Legal Counsel Don Hutchinson in an EFC press release. The court addressed a "technicality" but did not deal with the heart of the matter, asserted Hutchinson.

He explained, "Historically, Canadian parents have had the right, affirmed by the courts, to teach morality and religion to their children from their perspective, or [to] decide who will do so on their behalf, without government interference. The Supreme Court of Canada said nothing on those points in this decision. Rather, the Court hung their legal hat on a technicality, basically saying they were not making a decision on the issues at the heart of this case because the case was started before there was objective evidence of harm to children, parental rights or religious beliefs resulting from the Quebec curriculum as the ERC was not yet operative."



No evidence of 'harm'?

Hutchinson continued, "Essentially, it's a technical decision based on the lack of evidence of harm in the record when the decision was made at the trial level, the first level of hearing at the Quebec Superior Court. Parents and other Canadians should see this for what it is, a non-decision on parental rights and religious freedom in which the Court has simply clarified the process for bringing and evaluating a complaint of a rights violation before the courts."

What brought the issue to the Supreme Court was a mandatory "ethics and religious culture" course taught in Quebec to all children from grades one through 11 – whether those children attend public, private, public faith-based schools or are home-schooled.

The purported aim of the course is to teach children "tolerance" in a multicultural society, but the course itself proved to be controversial, and what many felt was intolerant. The EFC press release pointed out that the course "challenges the rights and values of parents and their religious beliefs. Parents who felt that the program conflicted with their religious beliefs had their requests that their children be exempted from the program categorically denied." When that happened, those parents filed suit in the court system.

In ruling on the case the Supreme Court asserted that the parents who objected to the course and wanted their children removed from it had not previously and "objectively" proven that the course actually violated their religious rights.

The Court essentially took a wait-and-see attitude, leaving "the door open to a similar case returning to the court if an objective infringement of rights can be demonstrated, rather than a parental concern about infringement," said EFC Legal Counsel Faye Sonier. That is troubling, said Sonier, because "the Court could have dealt with the issue instead of setting it up for the potential to return in the four to seven years a similar fact situation will take to get through the court system again after somebody has the objective evidence of their rights being violated by the program."

Don Hutchinson concluded, "Provinces across Canada permit classroom exemptions, either in regulation or practice, or other forms of accommodation. Further, the province of Quebec did not demonstrate why this course is mandatory to ensure a peaceful and tolerant society. At least the Supreme Court has sounded a warning to the provincial ministries of education to be reasonable or risk ending up before the Court with the potential for a decision that favours parental rights. It appears that the judges are hoping that the parents and politicians will work out a solution that keeps this situation from re-entering the court system." ✂

U.S. : Calvin physician testifies to Congress at religious liberty hearing

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CRCNA) – Calvin College medical director Dr. Laura Champion was among the 10 representatives of various faith traditions who testified on Feb. 16 at a U.S. congressional hearing. The hearing examined the controversial federal mandate that will require church-affiliated employers to cover birth control, including abortifacients and sterilization, in their health plans (see story in CC, Feb. 27).

The House of Representatives' Committee on Oversight & Reform called the hearing entitled "Lines Crossed: Separation of Church and State: Has the Obama Administration Trampled on Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Conscience?"

After receiving the invitation through Calvin's connection to the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, Calvin President Gaylen Byker, Vice President for Student Life Shirley Hoogstra and Provost Claudia Beversluis determined that Dr. Champion would be "a helpful, informed witness."

Calvin College and Dr. Champion wanted to take part in the hearing since "it is in Calvin's interest, as well as other Christian higher education institutions, to stand for religious conscience exceptions and religious liberty," said the college.

Champion said during her testimony, "Even when Americans hold vastly different views on the sanctity of life, this mandate raises a point that should be examined by all: Do we value religious freedom in our country or not?"

Others who testified at the hearing included a Jewish rabbi, a handful of Christian college, university and seminary presidents and professors, the head of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and a Roman Catholic bishop.

President Obama's announcement of the mandate unleashed much dissent and ignited a battle between those who insisted the issue is one only of women's health and those who said the mandates violates their religious liberty.

The week after the hearing 12 plaintiffs – seven state attorney generals (representing Nebraska, South Carolina, Michigan, Texas, Florida, Ohio, Oklahoma), a school, two women, a charitable group and a major Catholic insurer – filed suit against the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS). The Catholic cable TV network EWTN filed a separate suit.

Dr. Laura Champion's congressional testimony

... In order to understand our religious objection, you need to understand that we take seriously our faith commitments, our holistic student health services, and our intellectual mission.... [Champion then noted the importance of international students at Calvin College.]

This contraceptive mandate jeopardizes our commitment to international students who would be negatively affected by the college not being able to provide a health insurance option to them. Calvin is fortunate to have a fully staffed Health Services Department to serve the medical needs of our student body. We require that each student have health insurance to attend our school. We offer an affordable option for those students who enroll under-insured. Great care was taken in crafting the student health plan to ensure that it reflects the values and beliefs of Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church. This student health plan covers all preventative care at 100 percent according to the medical definition of preventative care; we do not cover [abortifacients] or sterilization.

I am concerned about the many specific facets of these regulations and I am concerned as a health provider about the wide sweeping regulatory overreach that the mandate on contraceptives signals. Contraception is not controversial at our school. Clinicians write prescriptions that include contraception for a variety of reasons, including the prevention of pregnancy. However, abortifacient agents are not prescribed, nor are they covered in our health care plan. The advocacy of these agents is profoundly inconsistent with the belief system of our college and our religion. To force the access of such agents upon our students would violate our religious liberty. Calvin College is committed to ethical, moral and spiritual higher education. To teach one set of values and beliefs and then to provide abortifacient agents for students would lack integrity. We cannot expect to train ethically minded leaders for the future and then require a compromise of values and beliefs by the colleges and universities that supply such leaders.

I want to underscore that our College and our Health Services Department would be severely harmed by the mandate requiring abortion causing drugs. We challenge our students to live out the values they believe. Our intent

and purpose is that our entire faculty, staff, and students are living examples of believers trying to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. We make every effort to ensure that our practices follow our beliefs. Forcing Health Services to be part of the distribution of abortifacient agents is an affront to our principles and sends an inaccurate message to our students. Requiring coverage of abortifacient agents is in direct contradiction to the spiritual and behavioral standards that Calvin College expects of ourselves and our students.

Even when Americans hold vastly different views on the sanctity of life, this mandate raises a point that should be examined by all: do we value religious freedom in our country or not? Further, the mandate elevates contraception and abortive drugs to the level of preventative health care. They are not. [Abortifacients] should not be considered equivalent to cancer screening or vaccinations. Pregnancy is not a disease. This is a premise that I reject both religiously and medically.

Recently the White House purported to offer an accommodation – perhaps the most fundamental flaw of which is that religious liberties are not something that any president has the legal authority to recognize or deny. As Christians, we believe these rights come from God, and as U.S. citizens, we believe our Constitution affirms and guarantees our right to religious liberty. There is a limit to what government can compel us to do or not do particularly in matters of faith and conscience. It is in the best interest of all Americans, of every ideological stripe, that this limit, this line, not be crossed.

This is not about politics, this is not about contraception, and this is not about depriving women of health care. Rather, this is personal. This is about my daily life as a physician, a Christian and a Medical Services Director. Whether I will be able as a physician to practice medicine within my belief system. Whether Calvin College will be able to continue its historic tradition of living out the faith it teaches. A government that is of the people, by the people, and for the people, should not force the people to violate their consciences. ✂



Dr. Champion (right) testifies to Congress.

Columns

Principalities
& Powers

David Koyzis

Religious freedom:
east and west

This month marks the sad first anniversary of the assassination of Pakistan's Federal Minister for Minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, a member of his country's beleaguered Christian community. As the only Christian in the Pakistani government, he worked tirelessly to end discrimination against non-Muslims, focusing especially on repealing the blasphemy law that has so often been abused to the detriment of minority groups. He paid for his efforts with his life on March 2, 2011, thus reminding western Christians that many of our brothers and sisters in Christ face daily persecution for living out their faith.

Bhatti himself, only weeks before his death, publicly declared in an interview his readiness to pay this price. "But I want to share that I believe in Jesus Christ, who has given his own life for us. I know what is the meaning of [the] cross, and I am following ... the cross, and I am ready to die for a cause. I am living for my community and suffering people, and I will die to defend their rights. So these threats and these warnings cannot change my opinion and principles. I prefer to die for my principle and for the justice of my community rather than to compromise on these threats [from the Taliban]."

Since then Voice of the Martyrs has gathered more than half a million signatures on a petition to free wife and mother Asia Bibi from prison on trumped up charges of blasphemy against the prophet Muhammad. Threatened with the death penalty, her case has aroused the attention of the world's press, thus diminishing the likelihood of its being carried out. However, many other members of minority groups have been victimized under blasphemy laws in Pakistan and elsewhere. Paul Marshall and Nina Shea have documented such cases in their new book *Silenced: How Apostasy and Blasphemy Codes are Choking Freedom Worldwide* (Oxford University Press, 2011).



Before his assassination, Bhatti was the only Christian member of the Pakistani government.

Obama and contraceptives

Here in North America we are thankful to God that we can live out our faith without fearing for our lives. Nevertheless, controversies over religious freedom are by no means unknown here.

In the United States the Obama administration has recently mandated as part of his health care plan that employers must provide contraceptives for employees, including abortifacients, that is, those that would abort the fertilized egg in the earliest stages of pregnancy. Although churches are exempt from this requirement, other faith-based institutions, such as Catholic universities, hospitals and charities, are not. Given that the Catholic Church opposes the use of artificial contraceptives and given that many, if not most, Christians oppose abortion, the administration's requirement amounts to forcing citizens to act in ways that violate their own religious beliefs.

Not surprisingly America's Catholic bishops have publicly opposed the President's proposal, including his attempt at accommodation, which would still have such institutions providing insurance to cover the disputed items. Of course, as the pundits have repeatedly pointed out, most Americans, including many Roman Catholics, use birth control methods not approved by the Rome. Yet even if most Roman Catholics do not live up to their church's teachings, this should not be used as a pretext to force those who do to abandon them. A government exceeds its normative competence when it undertakes to provide a presumed benefit to some by compelling others to act against their deepest convictions.

That Obama would make such an obvious misstep during an election year is surprising, given the consummate skill with which he conducted his first campaign four years ago. It suggests that his commitment to religious freedom, along with his awareness of the limits of government, is weak at best. It seems certain that his Republican opponent will use the issue against him.

Supreme Court rulings

Here in Canada, the Supreme Court recently upheld Québec's refusal to grant a parental request to exempt their children from the province's ethics and religious culture course, which was introduced in 2008. At issue was not so much that children are being exposed to different religious beliefs in a multicultural society, as that the course itself cultivates "a certain non-religious worldview which trivializes (all) religions and presents them in a way which discourages students from adopting religious beliefs and practices," according to the parents' lawyer. For now the Court has approved the province's mandate that all children take the course, at least partly due to its historic reluctance to interfere in a field of exclusive provincial jurisdiction, especially one relevant to Québec.

However, the crucial test of religious freedom will come when the Supreme Court hands down a decision in the case of Montreal's Loyola High School, which argues that, as a Catholic institution, it should not be required to teach any course from a non-Catholic perspective, especially one on the world's religions. Should the Court uphold the Québec education minister's mandate, it could have troubling implications for other confessional educational institutions elsewhere in Canada.

By putting Pakistan together with the United States and Canada in the same space this month, I am not suggesting that the Obama administration and the Québec government are equivalent to the Pakistani régime or the Taliban. Far from it. However, all three situations illustrate that guarantees of religious freedom cannot be taken for granted, either at home or abroad.

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Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman

Why Christian
scholarship is difficult

The mission statements of many Christian universities like Redeemer University College include not only teaching from a Reformed Christian perspective, but also "to support research and creative endeavour in this context." The research mission of Christian colleges is crucial not only to establish themselves as legitimate universities, but also to take seriously the call to explore God's creation. Through research, Christian colleges can be faithful academic witnesses to the world. Christian scholars should avoid working in a Christian academic ghetto; rather, they should strive to engage in the larger dialogue in the scholarly marketplace of ideas.

Lofty mission statements regarding research goals sound good, but the reality is not easy. In an insightful essay playfully entitled "Why Johnny Can't Produce Christian Scholarship," John Stackhouse explores a wide variety of reasons why Christian scholarship is difficult. One of the primary reasons that the research output of professors at Christian colleges is substantially less than faculty elsewhere is that they have much heavier teaching loads. Furthermore, most Christian colleges are undergraduate institutions which lack graduate students who are typically the engine of research at many research-oriented universities. Moreover, Christian college professors spend much of their time teaching basic undergraduate courses rather than the more specialized graduate courses which involve teaching leading-edge research. As such, it can be harder for professors to keep abreast of changes in their discipline during the busy teaching months.

Another challenge is that, in contrast to large public universities, Christian colleges typically have limited support staff, smaller facilities, and meagre funding for research programs. Christian college professors are also at a disadvantage when competing for funds from external research granting agencies because of their time and resource constraints. Furthermore, Christian college professors are paid very modest salaries in comparison to public universities (in some competitive disciplines, the top professor salary at a place like Redeemer is comparable to the starting salary at nearby public universities). Hence, many Christians with a strong academic pedigree and research potential are often wooed to larger research-oriented universities. I have been on several hiring committees where attracting qualified Christian applicants has been extremely difficult. To be sure, to pursue research in a secular setting is an important vocation, but Christian colleges also need to be able to attract and nurture top-notch researchers to help them in their mission to produce excellent scholarship.

Unfortunately, when finances are tight in Christian colleges, funding sabbaticals can be easy targets for cuts. In contrast to popular conceptions, academic sabbaticals are far from extended holidays. Sabbaticals are rare opportunities for more substantial research projects that require sustained concentration and effort, like writing a book. Another misconception is that professors have a leisurely four months off each summer. In reality, this is the one time in the year to "make hay" when it comes to research and publications.

Controversy

Another reason why Christian scholarship is difficult is that controversial research can occasionally place Christian college professors in hot water. To be sure, Christian college professors have a serious responsibility to serve the church and not to stray from orthodox Christian beliefs. Heresies can be easily sown by academics seeking provocative publications. But each Christian tradition also has its "sacred cows," and questioning these can sometimes upset the grassroots supporters of a Christian college, putting a professor in uncomfortable tension with college administrators.

Christian scholarship is also a challenge because the majority of Christian college professors earn their graduate degrees from secular universities. As such, although they are Christians, they are untrained and inexperienced as Christian scholars. Doing perspectival research demands expertise in one's own discipline, but also a fluency in philosophical and theological concepts. Many Christian colleges have mentoring programs for new faculty so that they can be guided by more experienced faculty and grow as Christian scholars. But this takes far more than a few lunch-time seminars on the integration of faith and learning, and many Christian colleges need to do far more if they are serious about sustaining their distinct mission over the long term.

Despite these many challenges, Christian colleges have a few advantages over large public universities when it comes to scholarship. First of all, Christian colleges freely allow (and indeed, expect) professors to articulate their faith in the classroom as well as in their research. Additionally, classes in Christian colleges tend to be much smaller, enabling greater faculty/student interaction for discussion on faith and academics. Small Christian liberal arts colleges also provide unique opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration between departments. Finally, Christian college professors have substantial freedom to explore less-fashionable areas and probe the underlying presuppositions in their discipline.

Christian colleges face many challenges when it comes to the strategically important task of research and Christian scholarship. The ideas published today have a way of shaping minds and the leaders of tomorrow. Christian colleges, together with the communities that support them, need to take seriously their mission to support faithful Christian scholarship and to help it to flourish.

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Reviews



The Insurrection: To Believe is Human, to Doubt, Divine
by Peter Rollins
New York: Howard Books, 2011

To doubt, divine: a young theologian's provocative inquiry

Spencer Boersma

I often marvel at how the prophets were able to call into question the very heart of their beliefs and practices, calling them idolatrous, denouncing their faith, and even accusing God of monstrous things, and yet doing so *in faith*.

Isaiah reported that the peoples' prayers, Sabbaths, and sacrificial system, the very things God told them to do, were perverse and detestable to God. Meanwhile, Jeremiah, when contemplating his task and the weight of God's coming wrath, accused God of raping him! For that, both of them were understood as traitors and even blasphemers, yet were actually the most faithful servants of God than their trite co-parishioners.

I admit I cannot comprehend that level of boldness. Our modern faith, in many ways, has forgotten this level of vulnerability and audacity in faith. We tend to look at our beliefs as unquestionable, inscrutable, and utterly necessary for maintaining comfort, meaning,

and security in this life, but in doing so, we create a space where our beliefs cannot be wrong, cannot be reformed, and much worse, become a source of merit and self-justification before God, keeping the world the way it is.

Rollins does something profound and challenging in his book, he offers reflections, not on what our beliefs *say*, but on what they *do*, arguing much like how Isaiah's critique of the Sabbath did not refute the goodness of the Sabbath *per se*, but did critique an idolatrous mode to how it was lived out.

The first part of his book meditates on the cross, bringing us deeper into just how shocking the cross really was and is. The first part of this book shows that the cross shows the destruction of "religion" (a term he redefines) where God is a concept invoked to make life feel better, more secure, and more certain. In contrast to this, the faith of Christ expressed at the cross is a moment of profound uncertainty, unknowing, and even, doubt in God, while still being a sinless example of Christ's faith. I think

Rollins, in quite provocative fashion, reminds us of the true and authentic depth of justification by faith, faith in spite of doubt, and even through profound moments of doubt. This faith is not security, but is assurance and hope when we no longer have anything to feel secure about left.

The second section of the book meditates on the resurrection and its transformative power. In this section, Rollins analyzes the function of our beliefs to point out that some of our theology and practice, while being in content true, much like the Israelites' practice of Sabbath worship, was being lived out with a corrupt heart, resulting in a sinful and oppressive mode of life, not holiness and transformation. Rollins gives great examples of how this occurs in the culture, in the church, and in Jesus' day. My personal favorite is how he playfully argues that Batman creates the crime he tries to fight! He reminds us that the power of the resurrection is more than just hope for the afterlife, much less something that delays action or perpetuates the ways of the world; it is hope and transformation for the present.

For the Christian that has gone through deep doubts and dark nights of the soul, this book will give words to the wordless confusions of your soul in quite beautiful measure. However, Christians that are comfortable in their beliefs, that have not experienced these moments of desolation, should read this book, but read it knowing that Rollins is deliberately trying to put you through a bit of a dark night for your own good. He is trying to rip off any comfort blanket a reader may have. This will be a profoundly enriching and maturing experience if the reader is able to stomach Rollins' quite sharp provocations. Pastors and teachers, irregardless of what category one falls into above, will find this book to be a deep well of illustrations and quotations as Rollins is a master story teller and wordsmith.

His book, in a great way, is sweet to read, but bitter to digest. In short, reading Rollins helps us smash our idols, especially the idols we don't want smashed, and in doing so, this book helps the cross and the resurrection to be scandalous again to a world that wants things to remain as they are. ➤

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The Kingdom by Starfield
Tone Tree Music, 2012

Winnipeg Band releases fifth studio album

Some Sundays, I find it really hard to sing.

I know I am not the only one. There are a lot of reasons why this is the case (that we are fallen creatures whose wandering hearts are often busy worshipping something else being chief among them), but part of our struggle, I think, is that it is incredibly difficult to connect to the words we find in front of us. We stand in the sanctuary with a deep sense of disconnect. How do we sing in a way that is honest about and true to our struggles, doubt and pain as individuals and communities, and yet remain committed to affirming who

God is, and passionately offering him this particular expression of worship?

In recent years, a lot of Reformed folks have been rediscovering the place of lament in the life of the local congregation, and incorporating a more wide range of language and liturgy to match the breadth of our experience as worshipping creatures. Part of what I have always appreciated about the music of Canadian band Starfield is how they have, over the years, made efforts to do the same. Their songwriting and performances have been venues where God is glorified and celebrated for his work, but also places where authentic language is given to the difficulty of a life of faith.

After several studio albums, the members of Starfield have chosen to produce this, their latest project, by themselves. *The Kingdom* comes two years after the Winnipeg natives' last effort, *The Saving One*.

The album begins with the screaming electric guitars and effect-laden vocals of "Natural Disaster." If the loud start comes as a bit of a harsh welcome for your tastes, don't put your headphones away just yet – the dynamics level out, and what might be for some an abrasive beginning flows into a warm and full-sounding collection of songs.

The stripped-down sound of the album's title track is surprisingly powerful, and a break from the overproduced, autotune-everything anthems of our increasingly digital

generation. An acoustic guitar is accompanied by a tambourine and a chorus of voices singing, "The kingdom of our God, carries on, carries on, carries on." The band also reworks the modern classic, "I Have Decided," a song I have always associated with Sunday School and summer camp, filling the simple chorus out and adding another.

If I had to guess which song will be most readily picked up by music leaders and song come Sundays (knowing that songs which the band has written regularly make it into no few orders of worship), though, it would be "Speak Now Jesus." The melody is simple, yet soulful, and paced slowly enough that even congregations with a slower learning curve when it comes to new music will be able to catch on.

Frontman Jon Neufeld is outspoken in his conviction that music constitutes only one part of a life of worship, and that central to the Biblical understanding of devotion is a commitment to justice, compassion, and relief. Like many artists, the band has for some time partnered with organizations such as World Vision, and the two brothers have traveled to witness and be part of the work which they are doing worldwide. This passion for a worshipful commitment to participating in the redemption of a hurting world runs through the album, but is seen perhaps no more clearly than in its final song, "Light of the World." "Then maybe we will find," the chorus rings, "that the light of the world will shine to the depths of the darkest night. The light of the world will shine through us."

Self-centeredness runs deep in our culture, and the church too often is of no exception. To be reminded that we are, in opening ourselves in worship, responding to the call to be sent out to bring healing and hope, is urgently needed to pull us from our navel-gazing tendencies.

Musically and lyrically, there is nothing particularly remarkable about the album. Some of the efforts to make lines rhyme made me cringe a little, and a few of the songs' arrangements struck me as somewhat uninspired. Some of the vocalists' melodies, however, are quite moving, and likely to get stuck in your head and have you singing along. If you are looking for some new music in the new year, or some new songs for your community, check out *The Kingdom*. ➤

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Features

Calling all middle-agers and seniors: Are you ready for the next stage of your life?

Elly VanAlten

We all go about life and living without much thought as to what may be in our future ... until we develop arthritis or dementia, or have a serious accident or stroke. For most people, this doesn't happen until we get older; sometimes this occurs in the prime of life. No matter where we are in the journey of life, and especially when we get to the latter half of our journey, both our physical and mental health can change very quickly, leaving us to make decisions when we

are in a very stressful place. With a little thought and preparation, this can be a less painful process. Based on my experience of working in a nursing home for over 23 years, I'd like to suggest some things to start considering and even doing now already.

Probing questions to ask

Are you living in the same house you have lived in for the past many years? Do you use all the rooms in it? Are you able to keep it clean, do your own yard work and shovel your own snow? Do you have family who are able *and willing* to assist you with these tasks if you can't do them yourself? If not, it may be time to consider downsizing and finding a smaller place such as a condo where the outside work is taken care of.

Do you have any physical limitations? Do they require the use of mobility aids such as a walker or wheelchair? Is there room in your present home to use these aids? Can you safely use the stairs in your home? If any of these are issues now, or expected to be in the future, then perhaps a roomy apartment in a building with an elevator would be better.

Do you make three meals a day for yourself? Are you able to get your own groceries? Do you need help with bathing? In many places accommodation is available that includes one or more meals and where help is available for personal care.

Do you have a social life? Do you still have friends who visit and whom you visit? Are you dependent on others to transport you to visit your friends? Perhaps a communal living situation (for example, seniors'



Planned changes can safeguard health and mobility

Change is extremely difficult, especially as we get older. Even though we may be living in a situation that is neither safe nor appropriate any more, it's very hard to leave what we have known for so long and feel comfortable with. Change means dealing with the unknown, and that is something most of us avoid. But *now* is the time to plan for the future, before a crisis happens and others must make decisions for us, decisions that

apartments) will provide the opportunity for a more active social life without inconveniencing others.

Have you given any thought about what kind of health interventions you would want (or more importantly *not* want) and have you discussed them with your physician and your family? Have you planned for a time when you are no longer legally competent to make decisions for yourself regarding your health and living arrangements? Although thinking about our mortality is difficult, making a Personal Directive* that identifies your wishes and names the person(s) whom you want to be your agent(s) (persons who make decisions for you), and will guide both your family and your physician to make the best decisions for you based on your wishes. It is extremely important that you choose an agent(s) whom you know will honour your wishes despite pressures from health care workers and other family members. Make sure that the person(s) you choose agrees to do this for you, that he or she and your physician have a copy of your Directive and that you take a copy of your Directive along with you any time you go to hospital.

Additionally, discuss the contents of your Directive with all your family members, and ask them to promise to support your agent(s) and honour your wishes. You might even consider providing each of your children with a signed copy of the Directive. You might also want to have a family member or trusted friend have Power of Attorney in regards to your financial affairs should you become mentally or physically unable to look after them yourself. You will require the services of a lawyer to get the Power of Attorney in place. A Personal Directive is not a legal document, but it is a document that health care workers are required to honour. Having both of these documents in place will save you a lot of legal fees should you require guardianship and trusteeship in the future, which are legal documents that are much more expensive to put into place.

Do you have friends who have had to move into a nursing home? Do you visit them regularly, or do you feel uncomfortable being around "those poor people"? Please don't avoid them! Your visit will be a blessing to them, and it will give you the opportunity to get a sense of the atmosphere and care that is present in the nursing home, and develop a comfort level about being there. The reality is that this facility may become your home in the future. If there are several nursing homes in your community, visiting them in advance will enable you to make a more informed choice about the facility that you feel you would be most at home in should placement become necessary.

perhaps we wouldn't have made for ourselves. If we fall down the stairs and break some bones because we refused to leave our present home, we may end up going straight to a nursing home. Making appropriate changes **now** may even enable you to live in the community longer before requiring a care facility.

One last very important piece of advice: *Don't make your family promise that they will never place you in a nursing home!* You don't know what your future holds, and the day may come when your family will need to place you in a nursing home because they want you to have the best possible care from those who are trained to provide it. Exacting a promise not to place you there may leave them with irreparable guilt should placement become unavoidable. I have witnessed family members who felt so guilty about the placement that they could not bear to visit their family member – both parties lose out and suffer in such situations. In my experience, most seniors' quality of life improved significantly after moving to the nursing home because of the expert care that they received. Trust the Lord and your agent and family to provide all that you need when you need it.

*Templates for Personal Directives can be found on the web. Choose a template that covers the aspects that health care in your province likes to see covered. It will look like a legal document, but use it only to make sure everything is addressed that you feel you want addressed. Also feel free to put it all in your own words, so it reflects your wishes and who you are.

Elly VanAlten is a retired RN with over 30 years of nursing experience. The majority of her career was spent at a long term care facility specializing in dementia. She is also on the Disability Concerns Committee of the CRC. She lives in Edmonton, Alberta.



Helping seniors live independently

The government of Ontario is proposing a Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit that will help seniors live safely and more independently at home.

The credit, worth up to \$1,500 each year, would be available to senior homeowners and tenants, and people who share a home with a senior relative.

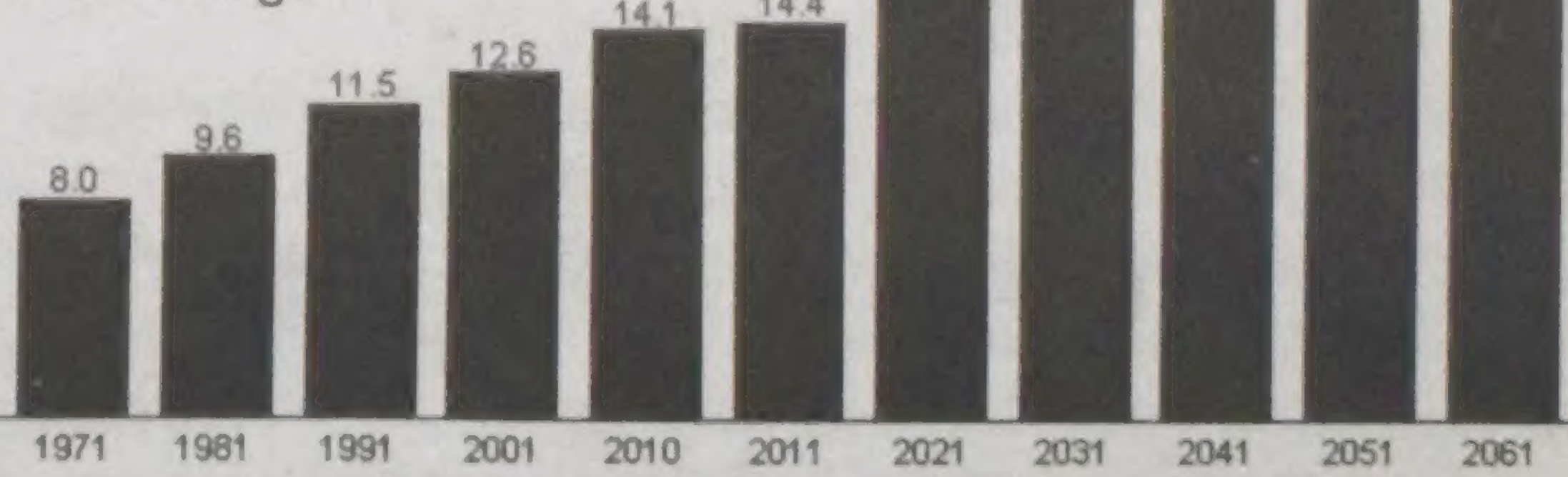
Helping seniors live independently for longer allows them to choose to stay in their own home if that's what they want, while also making spaces available for those who need long-term care.

Eligible improvements would include renovations that help a senior move more easily around their home like handrails, ramps, elevators and walk-in bathtubs.

Check with your local MPP to see what government services are available in your province.

Population 65 years and over, Canada, Historical (1971-2010) and Projected (2011-2061)

Percentage



Features

Everyone needs to know about this

Mary Klingenberg

I work as a hospice palliative care nurse. After several months of attending our Day Hospice, one of my clients (a former broadcaster) said to me, "I had no idea this kind of help was available. Everyone needs to know about this – you've got to talk to our seniors' group!" I accepted the invitation, and there were lots of questions;

What is hospice palliative care? I've never heard of it...

The two terms "hospice" and "palliative" are often used separately, but they refer to the same idea: it's an approach to health care that focuses on quality of life for an individual as the main factor in decision making. It involves compassionate, active treatment to relieve all types of suffering and maximize well-being. It does not seek to hasten death or prolong life, but allows for natural progression to end of life. Hospice palliative care is PERSON-centred – it seeks to discover and honour a person's needs and wishes. It especially addresses pain and symptom control, but also considers the full breadth of physical, emotional, social, psychological, spiritual and practical needs of the individual AND their loved ones as they experience losses. The care team includes the individual, their loved ones, volunteers, and a variety of professionals as needed, and most often is led by a Hospice Palliative Care Certified RN or Nurse Practitioner and a physician expert. An important role of the team is to advocate and find resources for the illness journey.

Isn't that just for cancer patients who can't take any more treatments?

Not at all! Palliative care should be an option for anyone with life-threatening illness causing distress and suffering, especially if there is no cure, and for those who have life-limiting conditions causing progressive deterioration.

Where do you get hospice palliative care?

This care approach can be taken in any setting – at home, residential hospice, retirement or long term care home or hospital. In Ontario, your local Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) coordinates palliative services for those living at home. There are 90 hospice organizations across Ontario that support people wherever they live with volunteer visiting and caregiver relief, day programs, expertise on symptom management and advocacy. Some of these include residential hospices, which are independent home-like facilities that offer care for those who are in their last three months of life, provided by experts in palliative care. Long term care centres and hospitals have palliative care teams who can be consulted, and may also have dedicated palliative rooms or wings. Access to palliative expertise may depend on your location, but thanks to modern technology, there are networks to connect with for consultation. While



The rooms in a hospice are large, comfortable and welcoming for family members to visit anytime. It resembles a home more than a hospital

some family doctors have a special interest in palliative care, there have been tremendous advancements in pain and symptom control in recent years, and many physicians do not have the time to stay current in this specialized area.



Hospice care: a meaningful farewell.

Who should plan for end of life care?

The real answer? Everyone – but especially those who are living with life-threatening conditions, advancing age, and late stage chronic illnesses. Some of us get notice of approaching end of life – many of us do not. Our medical system is designed to preserve life at all costs. Modern medicine can do so much to keep someone alive that we must shift our focus from "What can we do?" to "What should we do?" Unfortunately, most of us arrive at the hospital in crisis without having thought about it. There we encounter well-meaning health care professionals who generally offer everything available and avoid influencing decision-making surrounding the use of treatments. The truth is, as Ken Murray, MD, stated in his article *How Doctors Die*: "Doctors don't want to die like their patients do – they know enough about modern medicine to know its limits."¹ In an article in the San Jose Mercury News, Lisa Krieger described her experience with her 88-year-old father as he was admitted to hospital and endured one major procedure after another until he died two weeks later.² His wish? To die peacefully. After Lisa's story came out, Daniel Callahan interviewed her to explore her thoughts further on managing end of life. She indicated she would have appreciated someone stopping to say: "We can do everything, we can do some things and not others, or we can allow nature to take its course and keep him comfortable." "Stopping can be a gift," she said.³

We live in a culture that considers death the ultimate failure of health care efforts. Lisa says, "If we're going to change the culture, we need to honor saying goodbye."⁴ That is precisely what hospice palliative care does. It honours saying goodbye and gives every person the opportunity to make choices about the way they will live and die. Ironically, studies show that people who live under hospice care live longer (and better) than those with the same disease who are still seeking active treatment.⁵ Hospice palliative care brings end of life back into the language and experience of all people – not tucked away in a back room called **Failure**, but blended with grace into the rhythm and embrace of families, friends, and professional helpers. An old African proverb says, "It takes a village to raise a child." In hospice care, we understand that it also takes a village to walk that child "home." This is what we call "community," and this is the place where human beings thrive from conception to death and beyond

So why don't we plan for hospice care and end of life?

Maybe we just don't want to think about it or don't know how to go about it. Maybe we feel guilty, thinking we're giving up, that we'll upset people or burden them with morbid conversations. However, both doctors and families often wait for the ill person to start such conversations, thinking the very same thing. Both sides are concerned about "giving up hope." In reality, there is far more stress and guilt-ridden decision making when wishes have not been discussed ahead of time.

In hospice palliative care, we never give up hope – hope is what all people need to live and die peacefully, and is preserved at all costs. We don't hold to the (false) hope that we can avoid death. We hope for comfort, good symptom control, precious time with loved ones, shared moments of laughter or tears, preparing a legacy, celebrating a life lived, a chance to say goodbye, and even learning and growing.

So what can we do?

Start thinking about how you want to live and die. Talk to loved ones and professionals, and do some research.

Talk to your health care providers about your health condition. Ask questions at every stage, especially in a crisis situation: What is being proposed and why? What results can we expect, including side effects or possible further scenarios? Will this cure? How will this affect quality of life? What would you do for yourself or your loved one?

Write down your Advance Directives. This document spells out your wishes in as much detail as you can provide. Consider your wishes regarding resuscitation. Be aware that individuals who receive CPR rarely survive to regain their capacities and leave the hospital, especially if they are elderly or have advanced disease. In Ontario, emergency medical responders are required to start CPR until a physician takes over unless a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) form instructs them to allow natural death. Ask someone who understands and agrees with your wishes to be your substitute decision maker (Power of Attorney for Personal Care or POA) when you are unable to speak for yourself. Explain your wishes to your family and doctor(s) and tell them about your Advance Directives. Spoken wishes are valid, but written ones are most reliable. See seniors.gov.on.ca for guidance.

If you are or know someone living with a life-threatening illness, ask professional caregivers about hospice palliative care options. Many professionals have limited knowledge, so persist until you reach an expert. Visit the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association (CHPCA) website at chpea.net for helpful guidance.

Footnotes:

1. *How Doctors Die*: Ken Murray. Zocalo Public Square, zocalopublicsquare.org
2. *The cost of dying: it's hard to reject care even as costs soar* Lisa Krieger. San Jose Mercury News, 5 Feb. 2012-02-27
3. *An interview with Lisa Krieger* Daniel Callahan. Online Bioethics Forum, The Hastings Center, 13 Feb. 2012 thehastingscenter.org/Bioethicsforum
4. Ibid
5. Murray

Mary Klingenberg, RN, CHPCN(c) is a certified hospice palliative care RN at Dr Bob Kemp Hospice in Hamilton, Ont. She has developed and directed programs for the terminally ill, educated volunteers, and currently serves in residential hospice care



Features

The Psalm Project takes off

Henry DeJong

What a difference a year makes! In January 2011, The Psalm Project traveled from the Netherlands to Grand Rapids with just three of their band members to participate in the Calvin Worship Symposium. They were unknown and, though well received, had a limited audience and minimal CD sales in the months following.

The Psalm Project was invited back to the 2012 Symposium to contribute to its focus on the Psalms. This time they came with a full band of seven, and framed their Symposium participation with a busy tour starting in Toronto and ending in Chicago. In the space of nine days they set up to play and sing 17 times. This whirlwind of psalm singing was met by full houses, generous free-will offerings, and a strong demand for their English Psalms CD.

The Psalm Project began its tour Saturday night, just hours after arriving at Pearson, with a concert in Mississauga (see sidebar). On Sunday, they led worship services in Willowdale CRC and Mountainview CRC (Grimsby). Monday they gave a workshop and concert at Redeemer University College, and on Tuesday, after some sightseeing in Niagara, they headed for London to



The Psalm Project enjoying dinner in the Atrium of London First CRC before the concert.

do another concert. Throughout this part of the tour, band members were hosted in homes and were driven around by their Canadian supporters.

I met up first with The Psalm Project this year at the 5:00 p.m. worship service at Mountainview CRC in Grimsby, a combined second service of five Niagara congregations which was led by pastors Sid Couperus and James Dekker. Even with the inclusion of four "congregational" songs, The Psalm Project was able to sing and lead nine of their own. The church was full so the congregational singing was strong, and they were not shy about joining in on the new psalms.

The Psalms Atrium

The Tuesday evening concert in London was the highlight of the tour for me. The sanctuary of London First Christian Reformed Church was full, the audience was vocally receptive, and there was an enjoyable reception afterwards. A number of things came together for me at the concert.

My grandparents' family settled on a farm near London in 1955 and were members of First Church for many years, so I worshiped in this church regularly as a child (there are still the same number of organ pipes for counting). But First Church, while firmly rooted in this typical Dutch immigrant tradition, and worshiping in a sanctuary that is older still, clearly straddles the past and the future with a vision that is remarkably akin to that of The Psalm Project. A recent building renovation and expansion has brought its educational facilities into the twenty-first century and has planted a modern and wonderfully large atrium, as a street/fellowship space, up against the traditional brick with stained glass windows exterior of the building.

The new facilities had just been opened, so there is no doubt that curiosity contributed to the good attendance at the concert. But it was also clear to me that the building and the music were feeding off each other with their meshing of old and new. The audience loved their heritage of Genevan psalms, pews and stained glass windows, while still being alert and responsive to modern sensibilities of street ministry, guitars and drums. Members of The Psalm Project had, by now, caught wind of this from the overwhelming number of people who wanted to speak Dutch with them, and played to the crowd by teasing them with a Dutch stanza and a few Dutch introductions.

The Psalm Project opens up the space around psalm singing and brings it into the prevailing light where it can be more fully experienced. For many in attendance that night, such singing was a moving experience. Those who still know psalm singing in the light of other times and places were especially caught up by the feeling of enduring grace. But even without this connection, people loved the depth and simplicity of the psalm texts, the vitality and conviction of the musical accompaniment and the inclusive singing.

Psalms for All Seasons

The 2012 Calvin Symposium on Worship lay at the midpoint of the "Teach us to Pray" tour. The Symposium's invitation and sponsorship of The Psalm Project made the tour possible in the first place. The Symposium (celebrating its 25th year) focused on the exploration of praying and worshiping through the psalms, and, to that end, Eelco Vos, backed up by band members, led a workshop, twice, on "Singing Old Genevan Psalms in Very New Ways." But first they did a concert in Calvin's chapel on Wednesday evening as the opening event for the Symposium on Worship.

One of the main events that weekend was the introduction of a new Psalter, *Psalms for All Seasons*, which was given to every one of the 1800 participants and was featured in worship services and in a "Psalmfest." This substantial



Reprise of the Genevan jig

Calvin Seerveld likes to enlist Queen Elizabeth I (1533 - 1603) in support of Genevan psalm singing. The Queen found "Genevan jigs," as she is said to have called them, to be irreverent! "Right on!" say many, for whom this is a refreshing insult of a tradition now saddled with the weight of 400 years of ponderous, congregational singing. In his lecture-recital on "The Gift of Genevan Psalmody for today" (available on CD from Toronto Tuppence Press), Seerveld uses Psalm 47 ("Clap your hands") as illustration. Genevan 47, he says, "has a rollicking dance beat" that disproves "the false stereotype of grim severity often ascribed to Genevan psalms." The singing of this psalm during the lecture-recital is sprightly and quick (100 half notes/minute - much faster than a walking heart beat).

Even The Psalm Project doesn't take it quite that fast when they do another well-known praise song, Psalm 150 ("Praise the Lord"). This was sung towards the end of every concert on The Psalm Project tour and in the Mountainview CRC worship service. The melody was so clearly Genevan, even with its added syncopations, that audiences and congregation joined in immediately. The feeling however was "gospel," well-called by Miranda de Vlieter (who is lead singer for a Dutch gospel choir). And, with a simple chorus added on to punctuate the familiar verses, it got to be rollicking indeed. The grey-heads weren't dancing in the aisles, but you could tell they were enjoying it.

But it was the ending of this psalm, at Mountainview, that cinched it. Arend Jansen, a proto-typical, shaggy-haired guitarist, who had been playing along on an electric guitar, took off on one of those wild, solo excursions that you get in rock concerts, which, I'm sure, elicited mixed emotions. For many in the congregation, electric guitars have never been much good, but here you had a young guitarist going crazy over Genevan Psalm 150. His fingers, dancing a jig on the strings of a rock guitar, paid tribute to a people with deep roots and to a God who is faithful throughout the generations.

collection (over a 1000 pages) is a testimony to the "recent outpouring of new psalm settings" for worship and congregational use, and includes Psalm 134 from The Psalm Project. The Psalm Project is clearly not an isolated phenomenon. But it is uniquely placed to cultivate a rich, cultural tradition. Perhaps a season of psalm singing will be upon us again.

Henry de Jong is a carpenter who lives and works in St. Catharines, Ont. The Psalm Project and Genevan psalms are featured on his website "Worship aNew" (worshipanew.net).

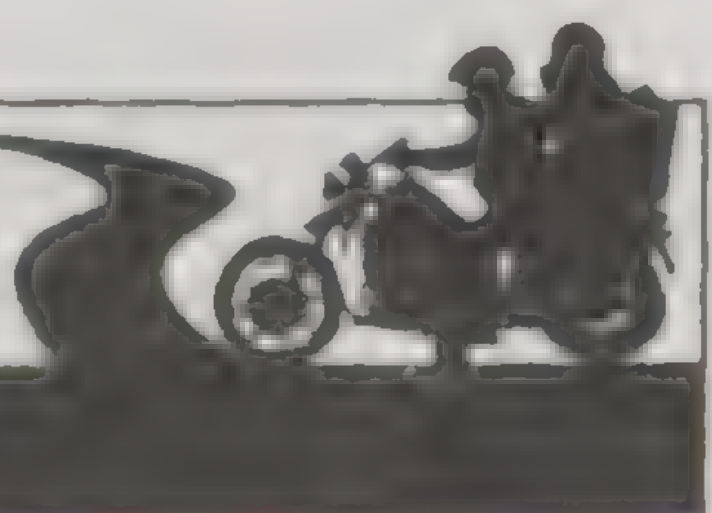


The Psalm Project's Psalms unplugged CD can be purchased from Faith Alive. Information about The Psalm Project can be found on their website: thepsalmproject.com.

Columns

Intangible Things

Heidi Vander Slikke



What, me worry?



Nowhere does the Bible require us to give up something for Lent. But many Christians choose to do so, for reasons as varied as the people themselves. From Ash Wednesday until Easter Sunday, it seems appropriate that believers focus on the sacrifice Christ made to put his children at peace with God. To that end, some find it helpful to abstain temporarily from some little luxury, favourite food, indulgent behaviour or bad habit. Others fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, or one day a week for the six weeks leading up to Easter.

I don't consistently mark Lent with self-denial, but over the years I have gone without desserts, chocolate, potato chips and television, among other things. It always amazes me how particularly desirable something becomes the minute I declare it out of bounds. I have thought of giving up coffee, but hey – I'm only human. This year I wanted to give up something significant, something meaningful, something that, by its conspicuous absence, will point me in God's direction day after day.



Recently I began facilitating a small group for The Truth Project, a comprehensive worldview study for Christians. During the opening session, Del Tackett poses the question, "Do you really believe that what you believe is really real?" It's a question worth pondering and it led me to wonder how different my life would look if I really believed God is who he says he is.

For starters, I have to admit that worry would be off the table. What we really believe manifests itself in our behaviour. If I believe in a God who is good, gracious, generous, loving, almighty, omniscient, etc., why would I worry about anything? This is the God who claims that he works everything that happens to me for my good and his glory. Everything? Do I really believe that? In my head, I know I should. But my heart often leads down a different path.

So I decided that this year for Lent I will give up worry. That's right. Imagine 40 days without anxiety. Jack and

Jessica immediately responded with exactly the same words, "Good luck with that!" Okay, realistically I would do well to manage 40 minutes without worry.

Who can go through this life without worrying? It seems as intrinsic to our daily experience as breathing. We worry about many things, because after all, that's how we come up with answers to our problems. No. There's a difference between being rightly concerned about something and worrying. I'm talking about undue anxiety over things we truly cannot change or improve.

I used to quote a rhyme to my kids, "Worry is like a rocking chair – it gives you something to do, but takes you nowhere."

The Bible I read every morning tells me of lilies and sparrows who do better at trusting God than I do. Page after page assures me of God's willingness and ability to provide for and protect those who love him. Sixty-six books chronicle his continuous care for his people and his power to orchestrate all things according to his purpose and plan. Why do I doubt?

To be honest, I don't actually doubt that God's will is going to prevail in every circumstance of my life. I am absolutely certain he will provide exactly what I need. What I struggle with is that he might not give me what I want. What if he decides the thing I want most is exactly what I must do without? I don't want to suffer. I want good health, happy relationships, prosperity and comfort for myself and my loved ones. The Bible says I can ask my heavenly Father for all of those things.

But I go much further. I offer him solutions, rather than trusting that even the problems, especially the big ones, could serve a greater purpose than any quick fix. I rationalize that after all, God is busy. He could use my help in figuring out how to deal with things as efficiently (and painlessly) as possible. He doesn't always appreciate my input.

Did Jesus worry? He agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane over what lay before him. He asked that his burden might be lifted, that some other way might be found. He prayed so fervently his sweat turned to blood. And then in complete trust and perfect obedience, he followed his Father's plan. According to Hebrews 12, Jesus – for the joy set before him – endured the cross, despising its shame.

Maybe that's what worries me most about God. If he willingly paid that high a price for my salvation, he must have great expectations for me. It's a good thing he has promised to be with me every step of the way. It's time to stop worrying and start trusting.

Well, as much as I can, anyway.

Heidi Vander Slikke (hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com) lives in Harrison, Ont.

Psalm 94: Supported

Artist Melanie Pyke: "My painting is based on verses 18 and 19, which reminded me of how we can and should rely on God when our circumstances are slippery."

*When I said, "My foot is slipping,"
your love, O LORD, supported me.
When anxiety was great within me,
your consolation brought joy to my soul.*

See Melanie's works at melpyke.com

Artful Eye



The Creation of Adam by Michelangelo (detail)

Prayer 2

You're so comical, God
with your funny little ways.
Don't you know I'm catching on to you?
Don't you think I'm getting it?
All these little tests and trials.
Really now,
not enough money in my account,
too few moments in my day,
so many problems I can't solve.
So I am all stressed out and half-afraid,
thinking you are high and mighty,
and very far away,
when all the time you're right beside
with that big, soft-hearted smile,
twinkling, laughing eyes,
whispering my name,
reaching, touching, caring,
running just ahead
or maybe just behind
always out of sight.
Oh, I'm starting to get it now.
I'm slowly catching on.
You can't keep your distance, can you,
even when you try.
'Cause you're in love with me,
wooing, courting,
singing love songs over me.
Trying to tell me of that love.
Wanting me to love you back,
and prove my love,
a thousand different ways.
To trust you,
to know that you don't leave.
Yeah, I'm starting to figure it out.
I'm starting to get it now.
But it scares me half to death,
'cause this could get really serious.

Rodney Hugen is the pastor of The Village
and a CRC church planter in Tucson,
Arizona



Column

My Window Seat

Mendell Hoekstra



We tried our best. As I explained in an earlier column, Momentum Choir auditioned for Canada's Got Talent in October 2011 ("Momentum Choir's got talent" CC Nov. 14). Most of the singers were extremely nervous. This was a big deal for us in many ways. CGT has a large advertising budget and thus most of the choir members had heard about the contest.

Many of our musicians have been told countless times in their life that they are meant to follow and not to lead, that they should be happy instead of belong. One singer said he was "used to losing." For some, going to Toronto was a big event and going to Toronto with countless other professional musicians was a life changing event.

I told the choir members that regardless of whether or not we were invited back, I was extremely proud of them and that they should be proud of themselves and their fellow musicians. I told them that very few people in life are willing to "invest their scariness" and that is exactly what we did. Not only did we invest time and effort, we put our hearts, nervousness and scared feelings on the line. And doing that is difficult. Furthermore, we did it together. I explained that when a group of people invest in a purposeful vision, great things can happen. I explained that this is the Momentum story; investing our scariness.

I believe that all people are born with an inherent desire to contribute and share their gifts. This is the reason why

Investing our scariness

a six year old beams with pride when they can help mom or dad cook. It's the reason why a grandparent yearns to share some wisdom with a grandchild, why someone who has experienced grief is willing to counsel another who is currently grieving. And it is the reason why a group of adults with special needs jump at the opportunity to contribute in a choir and shine for their community.

Our investment

First off, we invest our time in weekly rehearsals. Secondly, we invest our effort by singing some relatively challenging music. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly and most emotionally, we invest our "scariness." We go places we are very afraid to go, but we go because when we've gone there before we have come out stronger. We come out with a sense of contributing. Our members do it for their own self-esteem, the pride of their family both in biology and spirit, and for the good of the community.



One of the members of Momentum Choir during their Canada's Got Talent audition.

People were excited about hearing good news. Parents were bubbling with pride. Bus drivers were asking daily if we were going to the next level. Cousins were e-mailing and the members were filled with anticipation. We hoped and expected to be

asked back, but weren't. We were disappointed. To tell a group of talented adults with intellectual disabilities that we weren't good enough is very difficult. It needed to be told creatively, respectfully and honestly. I explained to the choir in clear terms that we were not invited back to continue in the contest. I explained that although we are going to continue to act professionally we still have a lot of work to do to convince some people to believe in us. It was difficult to understand and accept, especially for those who already believed we had won the entire contest. I explained to the members again how proud I was and how this experience was a blessing. Some were distraught and some became more focused for the next challenge. I reminded them that "smilers never lose and frowners never win."

I didn't hear back from CGT as to why we weren't invited back. Perhaps they just didn't know what to do with a 50 member choir comprised of adults with developmental disabilities, not out of discrimination but out of the unknown. Could they bring us on the show, bring us to a national audience and then vote us off?

Who knows? I don't. But I do know that we are going to continue using our gifts and seeing what doors are going to be opened for us, even if we need to bang a little and invest a bit more.

Mendell Hoekstra (mendell.hoekstra@gmail.com) is the director of the Music Therapy Program at Bethesda. He lives near St. Catharines, Ont.

Roots and Wings

Emily Cramer



I am close friends with two women who are opposites on the subject of motherhood. One had always loved babies and wanted to be a mom. She played with dolls as a little girl, spent hours making pencil drawings of babies in their mothers' arms, and was an avid babysitter by age 14. She married in her early 20s and had her first child not long after. The other friend was in her mid-20s when I met her, herself an only child, and adamant that she never wanted children. I assumed she would change her mind after some time had passed, when she'd met the right man. But nearly 15 years later, she is happily married and firm in her resolve.

Overall, I find the latter attitude more difficult to relate to. Although not much of a kid person, I'd always wanted a family and looked forward to my childbearing years. This wanting was increased by a two-year struggle with infertility, and finally discovering I was pregnant was one of the most joyful experiences of my life. I couldn't understand the conscious decision not to have children; if anything, it sounded selfish.

It surprised me, then, that my strongest emotion in the several weeks leading up to my baby's birth was fear. And not just fear of the birth itself. I couldn't shake the overwhelming fear that I might have made a decision I would regret for the next 20 plus years. I was so ashamed of this feeling that I couldn't share its depths with anyone and tried to drain off its excess with more palatable sound bites about nerves and being unsure of my parenting abilities. The real fear, though, was connected to the idea of permanent servanthood to a demanding, insatiable little person.

I don't think I'm alone in this perception of motherhood. Many women I know, and have heard about, and have read stories by, express similar fears and feelings. Sometimes it is enough to keep them from having children at all, and we

21st century motherhood

see this reflected in declining population growth. Sometimes it is just a gnawing discontent in the midst of the parenting years that oozes out a subtle warning and becomes a target for the media. Movies and TV shows are much more likely to spoof the trials of parenthood than to romanticize its joys. So what is it about our culture that produces such a counter-intuitive response to our drive to reproduce? What puts us – women and men – at odds with our own bodies and hearts?

Changing conditions and beliefs

There is obviously no easy answer to this question, but we can guess about causes. A significant one in my experience has been the changing nature of community. In the time when most women became mothers and most mothers stopped working, a natural, geographical community formed, built on shared need. Today a mom home with a child, even just for a year of maternity leave, is at risk of isolation.

Our cultural relationship to children might also feed the fears of mothers and would-be mothers. At one time the goal of parenting was to get the child past danger and need so he/she could become a contributing adult as soon as possible. Wealth, time, child psychology, and extended adolescences have changed our ideas about childhood. We now see it as a precious time to be protected at all costs. Overall, this is a positive change, but an unexpected by-product might be fear of failure to live up to these high ideals. What horrendous effects might come of our mistakes? We criticize our own parents and joke about the years of therapy needed for childrearing follies.

We in the West have also developed a culture of individualism, and that makes personal commitment frightening – allowing another person to affect our choices. This is especially true of permanent commitments like



While we used to see childhood as a period of vulnerability to be survived, we now see it as a precious time to be protected at all costs.

marriage and parenthood. A big part of my fear of becoming a mom was the fear of losing myself and the freedom to meet my own needs, selfish though it sounds.

Not long ago I saw a television interview with Ron MacLean from Hockey Night in Canada. He said his one major regret was not having children. At the time when he and his wife were discussing kids, their careers ramped up and, almost incidentally, they gave up on the idea. Years later, with many public career successes and financial security under his belt, kids are the one "ungettable-get."

Time makes me increasingly thankful for my lack of control. If I had total control over my heart and my biology, I may not have had children, I may not have had my daughter who, in two months, has fulfilled me to an extent I couldn't have foreseen. And maybe, in spite of us, the pendulum of culture will begin to swing back again. Not back to the age of gender inequality and child labour and other abuses, but a more moderate "back" in the eternal drive toward equilibrium. Just as God works within culture such as we've made it, he also works within the mess of me, bending me to his will, giving me what I need in spite of myself.

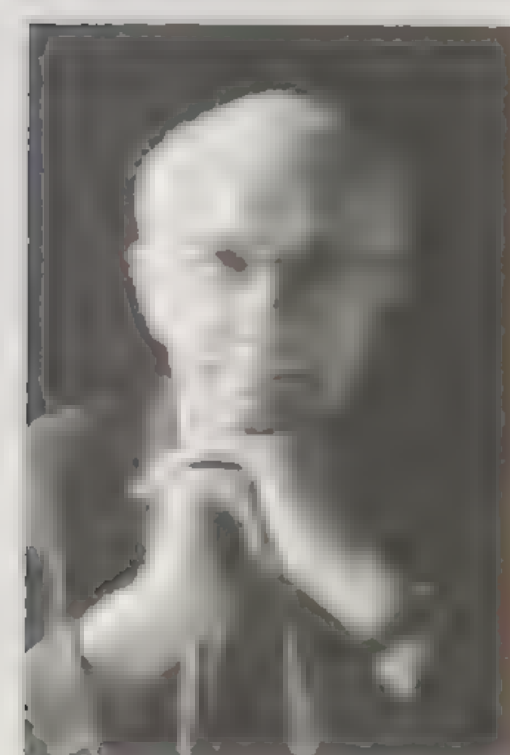
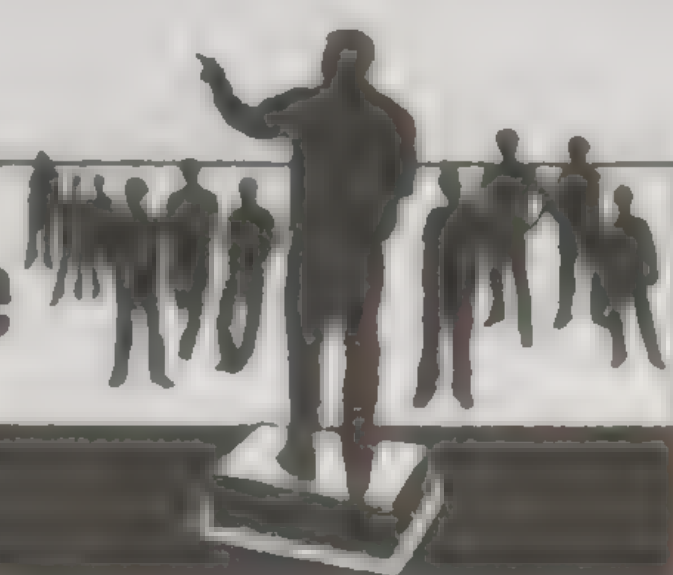
Emily Cramer lives in Barrie, Ont. with her husband and teaches in the Liberal Arts department at Georgian College.

She is the proud new momma of a baby girl and during feedings is devouring George MacDonald's The Princess and the Goblins.

Columns

The Public Square

Harry Antonides



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is playing a major role in aligning American policies with those of the 56-Muslim nations' Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Central to this issue is the OIC's insistence that all criticism of Islam be severely curtailed, as per UN Resolution 16/18 of the Human Rights Council adopted in April 2011.

Resolution 16/18 deals with combating intolerance, stereotyping, stigmatizing, and incitement to violence against persons based on religion or belief. One of the articles called on states "to criminalize incitement to imminent violence based on religion or belief." (Reading the relevant documents makes it very clear that only one religion, Islam, is intended.)

In the planning meeting prior to the Dec. 12, 2011 joint U.S. and OIC conference in Washington, Clinton observed that UN Resolution 16/18 has provided "a comprehensive framework" for addressing this issue at the international level. She added that each country needs to do more in respecting religious differences.

During the trial in federal court of the Holy Land Foundation in 2007, there came to light a Muslim Brotherhood document that laid out in detail a "Civilization-Jihadist Process" that includes the following statement: "The Ikhwan [Brotherhood] must understand that their work in America is a kind of grand Jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within."

The language in the speeches and documents produced by the OIC is a classic case of doublespeak. On one hand there is plenty of lip service to tolerance, freedom and respect for differences. On the other hand, the reality in all Sharia-ruled countries is that there is no freedom of any kind for non-Muslims, to the point that leaving Islam is considered to be a crime punishable by death.

The bitter irony is that while these one-sided discussions between the U.S. State Department and the OIC are going on, tens of thousands of Christians are fleeing Iraq, Egypt, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Sudan and other Sharia-ruled countries because life is made unbearable for them.

A prized target

None of these things are put on the OIC agenda. Instead, the intent of the Muslim participants in these discussions is to persuade the Western leadership, often with subtle underlying threats, that they must curtail any critical public discussion about the practice of Sharia law. On that score Muslim leaders have been very successful in Europe. But their main aim has now moved to the U.S., the most powerful leader of the free West, and therefore the most prized

How nations self-destruct

target.

Amazingly, with the arrival of President Obama in the White House the opportunities for Islamic expansion in the U.S. have greatly increased. We have now come to the upside down moment in which Hillary Clinton, representing America to the world, does not defend her own country but disparages it, while giving high praise to the Muslim leadership. (She would not be able to do this if Obama himself were not of the same mind.)

The current favourable trend for Muslim inroads into the U.S. has been facilitated by the appointment of Muslim believers to key positions in the American government. Here are only three of a long list of such appointments: Dalia Mogahed, appointed to Obama's faith advisory council as well as to the advisory council of the Department of Homeland Security; Rashad Hussain, who serves as envoy to the OIC and advisor to the president; and Hillary Clinton's deputy chief of staff Huma Abedin, who is a Muslim and has been a Clinton staff member since 1996.

What further indicates Obama's pro-Islam policies – as articulated in his 2009 speeches in Cairo and Istanbul – is his order to all government agencies never to link Islam with terrorism. The Justice Department recently cancelled a number of scheduled training sessions at national security agencies by scholars such as Robert Spencer and Steven Emerson who are critical of Islamic teachings.

This department is reviewing all training materials for the law enforcement and national security communities to make sure that all critical comments offensive to Muslim pressure groups are removed. Recently, Dwight C. Holton, speaking for Attorney General Eric Holder, had this to say:

"I want to be perfectly clear about this: training materials that portray Islam as a religion of violence or with a tendency towards violence are wrong, they are offensive.... They will not be tolerated."

In short, the Obama administration and OIC's current discussions about criminalizing speech that is offensive to Muslim pressure groups are endangering the freedom and security of America. We should hope and pray that there are still sufficient resources of truth and freedom within the American people to reverse the policies that have begun to be put in place by the current regime. Is this not the right time for us as Christians – wherever we live in the free West – to speak up against this travesty of justice?

Harry Antonides is the former director of research and education for the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC). He lives in Willowdale, Ont. – can be reached at hantonides@sympatico.ca

Country Living

Meindert Vander Galien



I enjoy leafing through magazines from the 1940s, '50s and '60s such as the *Family Herald*, *Farmer's Advocate*, *Canadian Countryman* and others. Occasionally I find these magazines at yard sales.

Last week I moved a stack of old magazines to new shelves I built in our garage/workshop and came across a March 1911 issue of *The Farm Journal*. It has a wealth of information about farming, all in very small print.

It was the 1954 special home and improvement spring issue of *Canadian Homes and Garden* that gave me the most chuckles. Some of their "easy" home repairs and cooking tips are so complicated they're wacky. Here are a few that should give you a good laugh:

To remove grease from top of broth, float a piece of tissue paper lightly on top of soup and it will absorb the grease. Or, skim the soup with a piece of ice and the grease will harden and can be scraped off the ice. I know an easier way. Let it cool and then scoop off the grease.

Measuring cement mixtures: If you prefer doing your own cement work you've probably been plagued by the problem of how to measure a cubic foot of sand and cement without building a special measuring box. Worry no more. Here's how to do it with a pail. Water weighs 1 pound a pint and there are 62½ pounds in 1 cubic foot of water. So all you have to do pour 7¾ gallons of water in the pail and mark the level. Any dry mixture poured up to the mark will be 1 cubic foot in volume. Sounds simple, eh?

Plant covers: When you buy plastic bags at grocery stores, save the bags which have no holes in them and use them as frost protection covers. Measure length of bag and add two inches. Double this measurement and cut stiff wire same length. Bend the wire in half to form a V. Then press ends of wire into ground on either side of plant and pull plastic bag down over the wires and plant. Aren't you glad we have buckets and pails?

Garbage can holder: To keep dogs from upsetting your garbage can, make a steel pipe hanger for it. Use half inch galvanized pipe or steel rod, bend one end into a shepherd's crook and set other end in the ground or in a concrete base. Length of pipe will depend on size of garbage can, and how far off the ground you want to suspend it. When dogs try to nose lid off, can swings and hits them on the nose. Won't hurt them but scares them enough to discourage foraging. Okay, how do you bend a galvanized pipe into a shepherd's crook?

Simple irrigating system: Use ¾ inch

Home repair advice from the past

pipe, capped at one end, and with a fitting on the other end to take a standard garden hose. Drill ½ inch diameter holes every 16 inches along one side of pipe. Dig trenches a few inches deep between rows of vegetables stretching length of garden. Then place pipe at one end with the holes opening into trenches. Connect hose. When water is turned on, it runs into trenches. But how do you hoe the veggie rows with the pipe buried a few inches deep?



Hose storage: When finished with the garden hose for the season, coiling the hose and placing it in a sheltered spot will lengthen its life. Lacking a reel isn't a problem, for you can use a bushel basket and coil the hose inside. The space left in the centre is handy for keeping small attachments or tools such as trowels and hand cultivators.

Care of tools: As soon as you are through using your rake, hoe or scythe, clean the tools and dry them. Then wipe with an oily rag to prevent rusting. An easy way to do these operations is to plunge the tools into oil-soaked sand a few times. Then hang tools to dry in their proper place. Oil-soaked sand?

Use tiny bits of soap: Save pieces of soap, tie them tightly in a piece of soft flannel, and dip in boiling water until soft. Place in cold water until firm. Remove the flannel and a good ball of soap is ready for use. Curious, I tried this and got soapy water but no ball of soap. Might work if soap bits are put in water-tight container, boil it and then put in the freezer.

Meindert van der Galien is a Renfrew area (eastern Ont.) farmer. He loves reading and is now reading the 600-page book *Khrushchev Remembers*

Column

Life Stories

Anita Brinkman

John VanderEnde



Looking back over a long life, John VanderEnde sees a lot of mountains and some deep valleys. But he would be the first to tell you that God has been faithful to him and to his family through it all. "We always saw God's grace. We've had some bad setbacks, but many more blessings."

John was born in Maasdijk, the Netherlands, the son of a gardener who grew mainly tomatoes and grapes in the sandy loam of the region. His home was near the dunes along the Nieuwe Waterweg, a shipping passage leading from the ocean to Rotterdam. After he'd completed seven grades of school, his father asked him to stay home and help with the family work in the garden. He did this for a while, but when he saw an ad seeking gardeners for an experimental farm, he decided to try it. "I started in a lower position," John explains, "but went fast. [Soon] we could see what the ground needed, what to grow. But then the war broke out."

With the beginning of the war, life changed drastically for John. Young men 18 and older were required to report to Nazi camps to be indoctrinated. To escape this requirement, John went into hiding on the farm of some family friends just over the Dutch-Belgian

border. On the way there, there was a "small incident." Their car was stopped, and the German border guard asked questions about where they were going, what they were doing. The family friend (and future brother-in-law) who was driving was able to give the name of his Belgian relatives, and they were allowed through. John is not a tall man, and didn't look 18 years old; the guard didn't even ask him for ID. "He did not think me eligible for the camp – I have many blessings for to be small," he smiles reflectively.

Because it had fewer laws and less paperwork than the Netherlands, Belgium was more difficult for the occupying Nazis to keep track of and control, which made it an easier place for "onderduikers" (people fleeing Nazi recruitment/imprisonment) to live during the war years.

John obtained a Belgian passport and worked as a farmhand on his friends' farm. He had several close calls over the years. Once, when the Germans were looking for men, a soldier saw him through an upstairs window in the farmhouse while his Belgian hosts were away at church. The man tried the door, and John thought to himself, "Well, if you come upstairs, I go on the roof." Fortunately the door was locked, and the soldier did not make a further effort to enter the house.

Other onderduikers were staying in another house on the same farm, and there were other close calls and accidents, but throughout the war, the group on the little Belgian border farm was blessed with safety.

Homecoming

Near the end of the war, once

Belgium and southern Holland had been liberated, John joined a Dutch unit of the Canadian army. After boot camp in Bristol, England, the soldiers fought under Canadian leadership to free the rest of the Netherlands. Once his hometown was free, he was given leave to visit his parents. He was told he could bring his rifle, but "it was a Lee-Enfield. With the bayonet, it was taller than me! So instead I went to the cook and got all sorts of food – white bread and such ... for my parents." Public transportation



was not running yet, so he rode in a military vehicle. At a fork in the road he offered to walk the last two kilometres, to save the driver trouble. His parents saw a Canadian walking alone on the dijk, and wondered, but as the man neared the house, they realized, "It's John!" They ran to meet him. "We didn't say anything. It was very emotional." He pauses. "I came in the house – I saw everybody alive." After years of war rations, the family feasted on the food John had brought, "and celebrated the Lord's goodness. We were all alive, unharmed, no one sick. I had about a week free. I visited friends, family – it was an absolutely beautiful time."

Soon after he returned to the army, he signed up to go to Indonesia with the Dutch army. While serving in Indonesia, one of John's regular activities was to go on patrol. "Patrols were usually 12 men single file, so many feet apart. I was often a scout – near the front. They couldn't shoot me anyway – I was small," he grins.

On one patrol in a particularly steep and mountainous area, he came close to losing his life. "We had a map, but maps were not so

accurate," he says. He needed to go ahead a little ways to check something. "I told my officer, 'If you let me go on my back, there is a tree that can hold me up.' It was very steep. I misjudged and fell, and slid too far – 15 or 20 metres – on my back. But I was a good soldier; I held onto my rifle and my grenades. Then I came to a part where all of a sudden, I went over an overhang, head down. I fell another 15 or 20 metres, and what stopped me was another overhang, some shrubs. I was stuck. I couldn't go left or right, up, or down. I prayed and prayed. Then the patrol called, 'Are you alive?'" They made a rope of rifle straps and belts and sent down two more from the patrol to the first overhang, where they could anchor themselves to a tree and send down the makeshift rope to John. "It was a good thing again that I was small and light," he grins. When the patrol was moving again, John says, "My

buddy behind me was so shaken up, he needed the whole road," and moves his hands to indicate how unsteadily the man was walking. "But I was okay. The Lord gave me peace."

Other dangers

During his time in Indonesia,

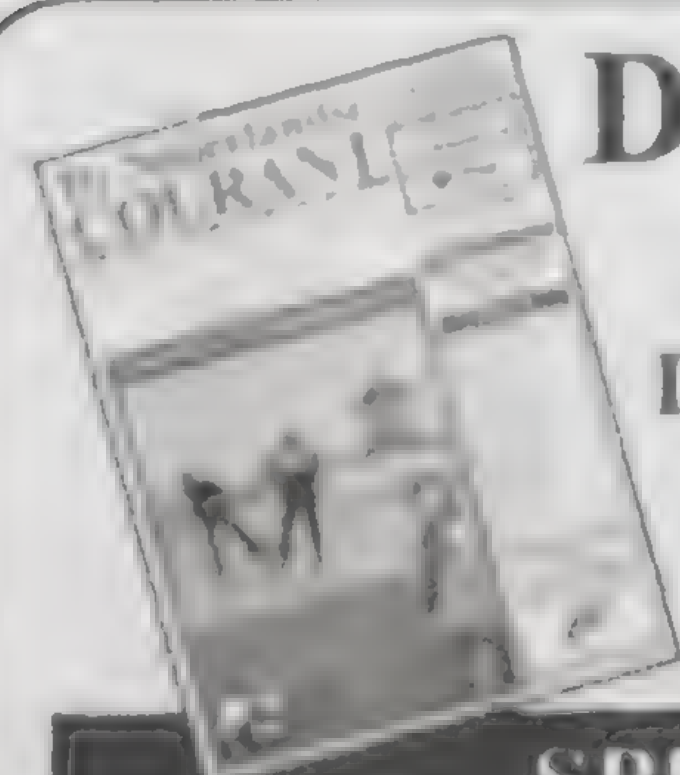
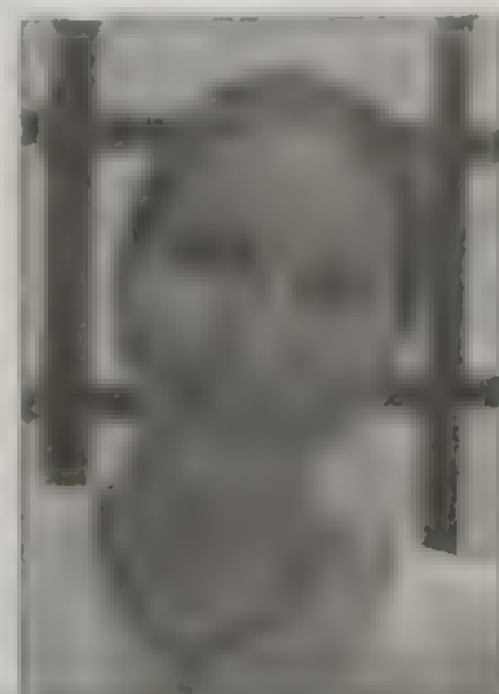
John dealt with other dangerous incidents, like when a troop transport truck he was riding in went halfway off the road, over a steep ravine. The truck did eventually fall, but only after all of the men had safely evacuated it. He also dealt with other inconveniences such as bad food and ill-fitting uniforms. Many times he would go to the kitchen and find the meal so unappealing that he would "go buy a banana." And when it came to the clothes the army gave him, "only my shoelaces fit." Once, his whole patrol returned hours late to camp because he had slowed them down – he had to keep stopping to tie the soles of his shoes back on with ropes. His shoes were replaced soon after.

After about three years new troops were coming from Holland, and John and his companions were told they could go home. By that time, John had become very attached to the country. "I thought it was the nicest land in the whole world – for nature,

and growing." He considered moving to Indonesia permanently as a civilian. For various political reasons, however, he was not able to stay; as a condition for receiving help with rebuilding after World War II, countries in Europe were not permitted to retain control of colonies in Asia. But Indonesia was not a colony, says John. "6000 Dutch soldiers never came back to Holland. They gave their lives for freedom for others." The aim of Dutch action, he says, had been to rid the country of terrorists and to help the Indonesian people take control of factories and industries the Dutch had begun.

John sailed back to Holland. His parents, living near the Nieuwe Waterweg, saw his ship and biked to some docks on the way to wave to him as he passed. Also waiting for him was Edith, a "good acquaintance" with whom he had been corresponding. John remembers "We were bused to our homes. We celebrated again that the Lord saved us – all nine of us [in my family] were healthy and well. I got a month leave and slowly returned to civilian life." As a parting gift to Indonesia veterans, the government gave them 100 guilders to buy a good Sunday suit, and a month of free train travel. John married Edith in 1950, worked for a time in Holland, and immigrated to Canada with Edith and their two children in 1954. In Canada he worked on various farms, helped with the construction of highway 401 in southwestern Ontario, apprenticed as a tinsmith, and eventually bought a mushroom farm. For the next 26 years, he ran the mushroom farm, working as a tinsmith during summers. "The farm expanded over the years," says John, but he proudly notes, "it was always a one-family mushroom outfit." That family grew, and John and Edith have seen grandchildren and even great-grandchildren. They have experienced trials and tragedies, but John notes the many blessings God has provided through the difficult times. "Always, God is faithful." >

Anita Brinkman is a part-time tutor and freelance writer from Chatham, Ont. With this series, she hopes to demonstrate that every life has stories worth preserving and sharing.



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Numbers 6:24-26

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Obituary

June 8, 1935
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Dec. 8, 2011
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Beloved wife of:
Dick (Dirk) Van Beek

Dear Mother of:
Susan Barbara (Peter) Peters
Peter George (Tracey) Van Beek

Loving Oma of:
Samantha Peters
Debra Peters
Shoukia Van Beek



A Celebration of Sharon's life was held on Tuesday, December 13, 2011 at the Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church, Surrey, B.C., with Pastor Albert Westerhuis officiating. Sharon is dearly missed by her family and many friends.

*But I have stilled and quieted my soul;
like a weaned child with its mother,
like a weaned child is my soul within me.*

Psalm 131:2

Correspondence: Dick Van Beek
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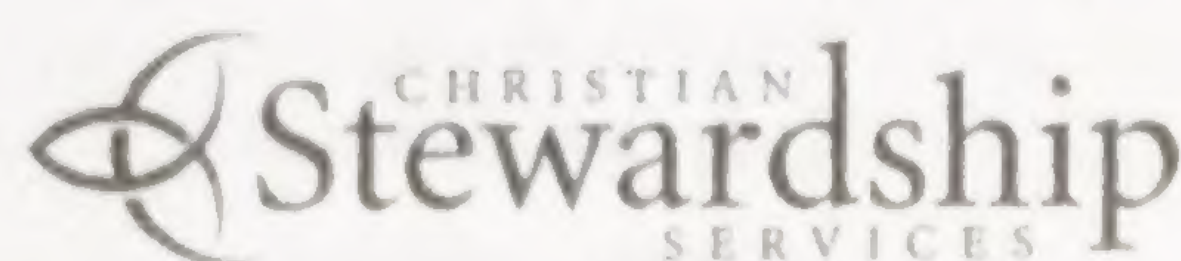
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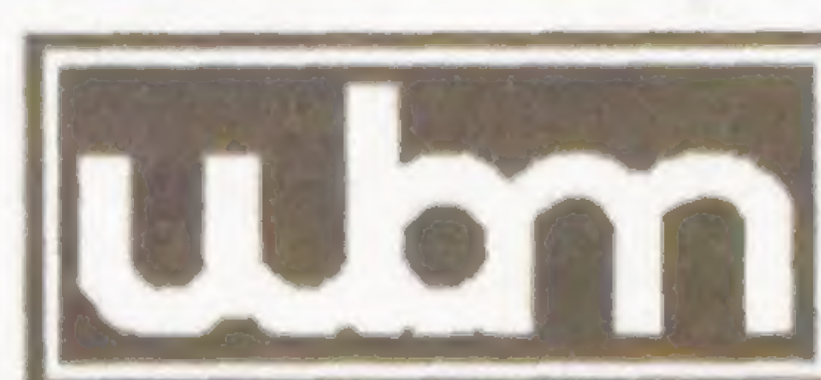


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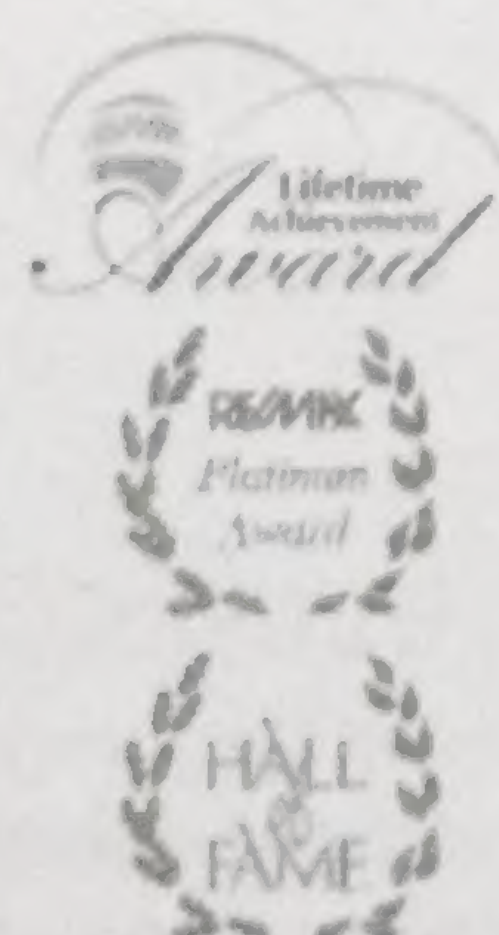
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Mar 17** Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents 'Wie Kaatst...die Wint.' Memorial Community Hall, Blyth. 8 pm. See Feb 27 issue..
- Mar 21** A "Benefit Concert," for Eurovangelism. Liselotte Rokyta on the panflute and Andre Knevel on the organ at Bethel CRC in **Saskatoon** 7:30 pm. Rev. Brian Lise speaking. For more info call Brian 306-382-0714 or email brian@eurovangelism.ca Learn more about Eurovangelism/EuroAid at www.eurovangelism.ca
- Mar 22** A "Benefit Concert," for Eurovangelism, Liselotte Rokyta on the panflute and Andre Knevel on the organ at Valley Christian Academy, **Osler** 7:30 pm. Rev. Brian Lise speaking. For more info call Brian 306-382-0714 or email brian@eurovangelism.ca Learn more about Eurovangelism/EuroAid at www.eurovangelism.ca
- Mar 23** Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents 'Wie Kaatst...die Wint.' **London** Dutch Canadian Hall at 7 pm. See Feb 27 issue..
- Apr 14** Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents 'Wie Kaatst...die Wint.' Great Lakes Christian College, **Beamsville**. 2:30 pm. See Feb 27 issue..
- Apr 20-22** Reformed Marriage Encounter Weekend. **London, ON** Register at reformedme.org
- May 1-4** Growing the Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit Guelph Bible Conference Grounds, **Guelph, ON** For information please visit dunamisfellowshipcanada.org For an event brochure, contact dfc@dunamisfellowshipcanada.org or 519-821-3603
- May 4** Noon Organ Recital Series (seventh season) St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**. Every Friday in May at 12.15 p.m. Free. Featuring Stephanie Burgoyne and William Vandertuin in Organ solos and "Organ four hand" selections.
- May 11** Noon Organ Recital Series (seventh season) St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**. Every Friday in May at 12.15 p.m. Free Featuring Andrew Keegan Mackriell, Director of Music: St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral.
- May 18** Noon Organ Recital Series (seventh season) St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**. Every Friday in May at 12.15 p.m. Free Featuring Randy Mills, Chapel Music Director Trinity College Port Hope and St Mark's
- May 25** Noon Organ Recital Series (seventh season) St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**. 12:15 p.m. Free. Featuring Joel Vanderzee, Organist Choirmaster St. John's - Kilmarnock School, Breslau.
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News



Climbers and a porter-guide.



John and climbing tentmate Ben.

Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro for Just.Equipping

John de Vries

The seven hour summit climb of Mt. Kilimanjaro was gruelling and challenging. After our dark 11:45 pm start, the 50-60 degree upward climb seemed endless. Each hopeful look ahead revealed the headlamps of climbers before me almost perpendicularly above. Holding tenaciously to crevasses or rocky protrusions to make sure there were no missteps, I decided that the best strategy would be to focus on the heels of the climber in front of me. The words of our guide, *pole pole* (Swahili for slowly, slowly) were reassuring and helped us set a slow and steady pace upward. At 18,000-19,000 feet the air was increasingly thin, cold and windy.

Our fund-raising climb began almost a year before the actual ascent. While spending February and March 2011 in the African Great Lakes Region with Just.Equipping (a Canadian charity committed to educating, training and equipping in the area of restorative justice), I learned much about that organization's work in Rwanda, Congo and Burundi led by the Rev. Dr. Pierre Allard and his wife Judy. With the Rwanda genocide (1994) becoming more distant history, finances have become a recent concern for Just.Equipping. The solution came somewhat unexpectedly when Monty, an ex-warden, heard Pierre speaking on *100 Huntley Street* about the life-transforming ministries of restorative justice and suggested a fundraising climb. Word filtered through the Correctional Services of Canada (CSC), where I had served as a chaplain, and I was grabbed by the possibility for adventure. If a senior oncologist friend of mine was able to peak Mt. Kili, why not me?

Thirteen people signed up for the trip, and I hadn't met even one of them before. But when we shared our bios and pictures, I told my wife that I would be in good company. Seven of my teammates were experienced climbers, four were runners, one was a gymnast, and all had a passion for restorative justice. It was a winning combination. On Jan. 20 we met for the first time at the Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, en route to Tanzania and Mt. Kilimanjaro.

You might be wondering what exactly restorative justice is. While criminal justice asks what rules were broken, who is to blame and what the punishment should be, restorative justice asks what happened, who was harmed and how do we fix it. Restorative justice involves community, and nurtures healing and renewed life together (see CRC Synod 2005, Restorative Justice Study Report). So we were climbing for a very worthy cause.

Reaching the top

Many climbers do not make it to the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro, which is 19,351 feet above sea level. During our climb the realities of HAPE (high altitude

pulmonary edema) made it important to attend to our twice-daily oxidization and heart readings. We were told that we were a strong and fit group, but high altitude diseases do not spare the healthy. It was very important for us to listen to our five trained guides, and to faithfully drink 3-5 litres of water per day. "Water is life," Brytton, our lead guide, unfailingly reminded us.

As we approached the summit, firm hands and fingers were needed for a better grip to propel the body upwards. After two long hours of climbing in darkness, it comforted me to know that our final assault of the world's highest freestanding mountain was one-third over. Only four more hours! Would I make it? Remembering that more persons have died climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro than climbing Mt. Everest was no comfort.

Successfully reaching the top was an amazing experience, and 12 out of 13 of us made it. What was equally (if not more) amazing was the harmony and relationship experienced among our team. As life as a team evolved, I took on the role of chaplain. I facilitated evening prayers and each day invited members to share their "thought for the day." This gave us material to share and reflect on at the end of the day in our porter-carried dining tent.

Another amazing thing about our team was its intercultural unity. As our first day fell on the Chinese New Year, we remembered this celebration in honour of Ben, a CSC researcher of Chinese background. On Jan. 23 we ate Scottish Haggis and celebrated Robby Burns day in honour of Alister, a Scottish Correctional Manager. Later we celebrated a Quebec evening, after which Lynne and I – the representative Dutch on the team – were called up to highlight a Dutch evening featuring Dutch diet, history and practices. It was good fun that eased the strain of our gruelling climbing days.

What is our next goal? That question wasn't answered *per se*, but as we parted we took with us fond memories of the climb and the relationships we'd formed. After all, restorative justice is all about relationships. There will always be tensions and differences, but by using what kids in restorative justice schools would call the "talk it out solution," the healing outcome is up to us. ➤

Rev. John de Vries is a retired CRC chaplain who has worked for CSC and served as Regional Coordinator of Chaplaincy Services Ontario. He is currently employed part-time as the Canadian CRC Restorative Justice Coordinator, serves as vice president of the Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC), and represents the CRC on the Federal Interfaith Committee of CSC. In April he plans to run the Boston marathon to raise funds for the CCJC.

How to make kombucha

You will need:

- 3 quarts filtered water
- 1 cup white sugar
- 4 tea bags of organic black tea
- 1 cup kombucha
- 1 kombucha "mushroom"

A kombucha "mushroom" or SCOBY (symbiotic colony of bacteria and yeast; sometimes also called a "mother") is a living culture that acts on the sugar and tea in this recipe to produce a fizzy, dark, and energizing drink.

Check your local health food store to see if they can connect you with someone who brews their own kombucha – many people who do have extra mushrooms and are happy to give them away. If you can't find a mushroom, you'll need to make your own. You can do this by buying some ready-made kombucha, which is available for purchase at many health food stores. IMPORTANT: Make sure you buy **unpasteurized** kombucha, otherwise your mushroom won't grow.

Fortunately, the process of making a mushroom and making a batch of kombucha are pretty much the same. Directions:

- 1) Bring three quarts filtered water to a boil.
- 2) Add sugar and simmer until dissolved.
- 3) Remove from heat, add the tea bags and allow the tea to steep until water has completely cooled.
- 4) Remove tea bags. Pour cooled liquid into a 4-quart pyrex bowl and add 1 cup kombucha (if you're just starting out and don't have a mushroom, you might want to add the whole bottle of unpasteurized store-bought kombucha).
- 5) If you have a kombucha mushroom, place it at the top of the liquid.
- 6) Make a crisscross over the bowl with masking tape, cover loosely with a cloth or towel and transfer to a warm dark place away from contaminants and insects.

In about seven to 10 days the kombucha will be ready, depending on the temperature. It should be rather sour and slightly sweet, and possibly fizzy with no taste of tea remaining. Transfer to covered glass containers and store in the refrigerator.



If this is your first batch and you didn't have a mushroom to start out with, after 7-10 days one should have formed in your kombucha mixture. It will look like a slimy, spongy pancake. You can still drink the kombucha from the batch you've made, but it probably won't taste quite right (might be overly sweet). But now that you have your mushroom you can start brewing in earnest.

When a normal kombucha batch is ready, the mushroom will have grown a second mushroom which can be used to make other batches or given away to friends. Store fresh mushrooms in the refrigerator in a glass or stainless steel container (never plastic) and immersed in kombucha liquid. A kombucha mushroom can be used a dozen or so times. If it begins to turn black, or if the resulting kombucha doesn't sour properly, it's a sign that the culture has become contaminated and should be thrown away.

One final note: some people may have an allergic reaction to kombucha, so for first time drinkers it is best to start with a small taste to make sure there are no adverse effects.

See related article p.4.